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MRS. MUNRO EXPATIATES UPON THE ADVANTAGES OF BECOMING MRS. JAMES HOLT.

THE MISTRESS OF HOLT'S FARM.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"Far from the rattle and roar of towns,
Far from the dwellings and haunts of men."

It was autumn. A summer of great heat had left the print of its burning fingers on many a glowing hedge-row and leaf, had ripened a rich harvest of ruddy berries, and warmed the waving corn to a rich golden hue, and bearded the barley bravely, while the well-fringed oats swayed to and fro in the gentle, balmy breeze that blew around Holt's Farm. The farmhouse stood on an elevation commanding fine views of the surrounding country, and open to all for winds of heaven; its queer twisted chimney-stacks standing out sharply defined against the clear, pale azure of the sky.

On the lawn in front stood James Holt, a letter in his hand, a frown upon his brow, which always found its way there when he had anything to decipher, for he was but a poor scholar, despite that he was master of the many acres of rich land that lay around, and the woodlands and pastures beyond. Beside him stood a tall, rakish-looking young fellow, somewhat carelessly attired in garments of the very latest and most *outré* fashion, with a much-becurled trimmed hat, perched on one side of his wavy hair, and a small switch in his hand, with which he incessantly lashed his boots and legs, while he whistled softly.

Strangely different they looked standing there side by side. One old, hard-grained, rough-featured, unlovely from the crown of his grizzled, bullet-shaped head, to the sole of his coarse, ill-made shoes; the other young, handsome, debonaire, pleasant to look at by reason of his freshness, and youth, and evident health and spirits.

"Well, squire," said the latter, at last, stop-

ping his whistling and switching simultaneously, "what do you say, and what answer am I to take to the gov'nor?"

"I—I—hardly know, yet," responded his companion, slowly, with a deliberation that seemed to cause the other a certain amount of annoyance.

"Well, when will you know?"

"After I have made it all out."

"You've been a long time making it out!"

"It's mortal difficult readin' this small writin'."

"Think so? Can I help you?" and the young man held out his hand for the letter, but James shook his head and clutched it closely, exclaiming,—

"No, no, maybe there are secrets in the dockyment meant only for my eye."

"I hardly think so; still of course you are welcome to keep the contents of it to yourself if you wish to, only don't be too long about it. I've been on my feet since early morning."

"Will you come in then and rest while I spell

fit out!" returned the farmer, with considerable reluctance, eyeing his visitor askance.

"That I will!" exclaimed his companion, readily, "and glad of the opportunity of sitting. Standing's been the order of the day with me this past week," and he followed his host with alacrity into a great room, part parlour, part kitchen; and while Jabez pursued his labours he sank into an old-fashioned elbow chair with a sigh of relief, and looked round with curious eyes, and no wonder, for it seemed to him that with one step he passed to the time of Bluff King Hal, and that Old Father Time must have put his clock back some centuries.

The low ceiling, black with age, had mouldered rafters, sculptured centre bosses, and carved cornices; the fireplace was a veritable ingle-nook, and could accommodate six or seven persons with cosy seats on a winter's night. The walls were panelled in oak, and good old Puritan texts decorated them, with here and there a smoke-blackened, queer picture of some dead and by-gone Holt who had thought it incumbent on him to leave a limning of his features to posterity, a kindness which posterity could not appreciate among the veil of dirt which covered the paintings.

A sentry-box clock ticked with monotonous regularity at one side of the ingle-nook, and on the other was a finely-carved Elizabethan linen press, with the date, 1595, rudely yet deeply cut in it.

Round the walls were ranged several stiff-looking high-backed chairs, matching the linen press, and in the centre was a massive, time-worn table, with twisted legs. An oak settle faced the many-paned antique window. On the tall mantelshelf stood sundry queer blue jugs and vases, and on the dresser, amidst the cups and platters, was a rude attempt at decoration, in the shape of an old punch-bowl filled to repletion with autumn blooms, whose brilliant tints gave the one relieving dash of colour to the dark room,—dark, save where the ivy and Virginian creeper set the window in a verdant frame, and thrust their leaves in through the open spaces.

"Comfortable place this," muttered Walter Penning, running his fingers amid his crisp locks, "should like to see the rest of it, only the old boy don't seem to have much geniality or hospitality about him," and he looked at the farmer as, with elbows on the table and head resting on his hands, he slowly and carefully studied the letter, seemingly oblivious of his presence.

How much longer he might have had to wait it is difficult to say, for Holt was not in the habit of studying the comfort or convenience of others; and all his faculties were occupied in a mighty effort to master the contents of his lawyer's epistle, but the noisy entrance of a third person created a diversion and made him look up. This person was a tall, gaunt woman, with high cheek-bones, sandy hair drawn tightly back from her plain face, and a pair of cold, cruel, goat-like eyes of a watery grey hue. Her dress was of rough homespun, with a number of tucks in the skirt, which was very short, and plainly displayed her large, clumsily-shod feet; a tippet, or "modesty" of sprigged lawn was folded over her bosom, and fastened with a huge brass-looking brooch; an apron adorned with a big pocket, and evidently crammed full of keys and odds and ends, were tied round her sizable waist, while the short sleeves of her gown left the coarse, red arms bare almost to the elbow.

"Be ye wantin' tea?" she demanded, in a harsh, rasping voice, that grated unpleasantly on the listener's ear.

"Tea, Rachel!" repeated her master, absently.

"Yes, tea."

"Is it time?"

"Time! Ay, yes, and more'n time. It's gone folve this twenty minutes."

"I did not know 'twas so late," he said somewhat apologetically; for if there was a person in the world whom Jabez feared a little, that person was undoubtedly Rachel Carillon, his cook and housekeeper.

"Well, ye know now," she retorted, tartly; "be ye wantin' it?"

"Yes, yes, ave coorse," he responded, readily.

"For one or two?" she asked significantly, with a glance at the lawyer's clerk, who was studying her hard-featured face intently.

"For two, I s'pose," answered her master, reluctantly. "You'll stay and have a cup o' tea," to Penning.

"Thanks, I shall be delighted to," returned the young man with an alacrity that contrasted greatly with the reluctance of the host.

"And wha's wantin'! Anything besides the usual?" queried the housekeeper.

"Certinly not," cried Jabez at once. "Times are hard, and enough's plenty," he added, enigmatically.

"That's so, master," agreed Rachel, with a grim smile, as she spread the cloth, and placed the old blue china cups in a row. "All man's labour is for the mouth, and 'enough's as good as a feast,' a body don't want to gorge."

"Shan't get much here," thought Penning; "this fellow's an old miser, and that ill-favoured female backs him up in his miserliness. Sorry I didn't go to the 'Three Ringers.'"

He watched her bring in a quaint silver teapot, a quaint cream-jug in the shape of a cow, and rejoiced when a red-cheeked boxom country wench appeared with a huge ham, and a huge home-made loaf, which were presently flanked by a dish of eggs, and some of those appetizing hot cakes for which the Northumbrians are celebrated.

"Not so bad," he muttered, as in response to a motion of his host's hand he seated himself at the table opposite him, the place of honour behind the hissing tea-urn being taken by Rachel, who rattled away at the tea-cups finely, which, like everything else on the table, were old, and quaint, and valuable, and formed a strange contrast to the two people to whom they belonged, for it was evident from her manner and speech that Mrs. Carillon looked upon Jabez, and Jabez's farm, and Jabez's goods and chattels as her private property. Whether Jabez shared this opinion Penning could not tell. But he hardly thought so.

The farmer feared more than he loved her, and though he never openly contradicted her lost no opportunity of doing so, and differing from her, when he could indirectly do so.

"Come on business, I s'pose!" she queried, her mouth crowded with ham and bread, of the guest.

"Yes," nodded Walter.

"Important!"

"Don't know," he replied, cautiously.

"Ye master didn't tell ye!" curiously.

"No," he answered, with a sly smile; "my master never does tell me anything."

"Ah! thinks ye a hinny not to be trusted, I s'pose."

"That's it, I guess," he returned, with another smile.

"Come straight fra Lunnon!" she questioned next.

"No; I stopped at Doncaster and York."

"Eh! but they're foin cities."

"Very fine," he agreed.

"But nothing to Lunnon, ye would say."

"Why no, certainly; most people would prefer London."

"Larger!"

"Yes."

"An' more folk about!"

"Yes."

"Master, ye've never been there?" to Jabez.

"No. Still, maybe, I must go some day."

"Ye go!" she exclaimed, in evident dismay.

"An' te Lunnon! Why, ye be lost."

"Lost or not lost, I shall have to go."

"And why, I pray ye!" she asked, with an appalling quietude of manner, fixing her stony eyes on Jabez's florid face.

"Oos there's business matters to be seen to."

"An' why must ye go—ye that ha' never been a hunderd mile fra home all ye life! Why must ye go now when ye ha' turned the stile

and are going down the hill!" she demanded, excitedly.

"I've told ye," he answered, sullenly.

"That's na reason. Ye're upwards o' sixty year, and durin' all ye days the lawyer folk ha' seen to ye business. Why canna they do it now?"

"Because they can't," he rejoined, with a testiness that silenced her for the time.

"Will ye come out?" he asked his guest.

"Praps ye'd like a pipe on the lawn!"

"That I should," acknowledged Penning, seeing the farmer wished to escape from his too importunate and too affectionate housekeeper, and that he had something to say to him.

"Now, tell me," said Jabez, when they were some distance from the creeper-decked parlour window, and quite out of earshot, "did Master Munro say I must come to Lunnon to see to this here?" and he tapped the letter with his horny hand.

"He said it would be better."

"In what way?"

"In every way."

"Tell me one."

"Well, it will save a considerable expenditure of money. If a notary, and the guv'nor, and myself as witness have to come down here I guess it will cost you a pretty penny."

"True," assented Jabez, dolefully. "Still I can't leave the farm now. The wheat isn't all reaped, nor the barley out, and there're a heap o' other matters to see to durin' the next two months or so."

"Well, come after that."

"Will it do then?" he asked, eagerly.

"Yes. The guv'nor said any time this year."

"Then I'll come the end o' November, you tell him."

"All right. I'll tell him to expect you then."

"He'll take me in, I s'pose!" queried Jabez, doubtfully; "cos I know nothin' about Lunnon, an' I shouldn't care to go to a tavern, where, maybe, they'd rob me of every penny I possess."

"Oh, yes, he'll take you in. There's plenty of room in his house, and plenty of squalling children."

"I don't care for children; still I'd rather hear them squall than have my pocket picked."

"Of coorse. That's settled then!"

"Yes," and after a little more conversation the two men separated.

Penning took his way to the station, and was soon in the train whirling away to town; while Jabez, after smoking his long churchwarden, and filling it and smoking it again, turned in, drank the measure of cider left on the dresser in the old pegged tankard by Rachel, and betook himself upstairs to bed and slumber.

But his slumbers were broken and uneasy. This journey would be a tremendous event for him. He had never been to "Lunnon," neither had his father, nor his grandfather, nor his great-grandfather.

The Holts had vegetated on their farm for hundreds of years. They were as tightly rooted in the soil as the giant oaks and elms that grew in the woodlands around. They were part and parcel of Holt Farm.

Generation after generation had been born in the quaint old house, had lived there, chosen their wives from among the plain-featured women of the neighbourhood, had tilled and tilled and wrestled with the soil to make it produce rich harvests, and yield them a goodly income, and then, when their time came they died there quietly, and were buried in the graveyard of the fourteenth century church in the adjacent village, where the grass grew luxuriantly, and the weeping willows waved their mournful branches.

They were staunch Conservatives, though they did not exactly know the meaning of the word. Nothing was altered, nothing moved in the rooms; now-forged machinery and inventions only cautiously adopted when seen to answer well on other farms; everything broken replaced, as far as possible, in the old shape and form; while as to cognomens, all the male Holts were called Jabez who weren't called Joe, and the women were invariably christened Jamima, Belshah or Pru-

dence, a custom which caused considerable confusion when there were more than two sons or three daughters.

They were stiff-necked race, sordid and mean, with hardly an idea above money-getting and saving; honest, in a savage, early fashion, infinitely more disagreeable than pleasant roguery, reserved, silent over their own affairs; rising early, resting late, toiling incessantly, and altogether making life a very dreary, colourless business for themselves, their wives, and children.

Still they had one satisfaction, which to men of their class must have been highly gratifying—there was always a good balance at the bankers, and their granaries overflowed with grain, their meadows were full of cattle, and their farm the best stocked for fifty miles round; and each one felt a proud satisfaction, as life drew near its close, to think that he had added to the golden guineas lying at Turnbull's bank at Bletchley, the county town, and thereby won a right to respect and admiration for not falling away from the custom of his ancestors.

Old Jabez had done as those who had gone before. He devoted himself sedulously to the gaining of wealth, and had been equally successful.

He was three score years and five, and could safely say that he had never taken a holiday, and never enjoyed a pleasure, that is, what most folk call pleasure—and never felt a tender emotion, or a thrill of passion, or given a penny in charity, or done anything that was humane or kindly or well-pleasing in the eyes of others.

Still he was rich, very rich; his word was as good as a bond, and not a few mothers with grown-up daughters regarded him favourably, and not a few dowdier damsels would have been well content to take Holt Farm and Jabez along with it.

But he did not appear inclined to marry, and it seemed as though the old family would become extinct. He was the last of his race—that is, the last of the name of Holt.

There was Claude Hartley, his only cousin's child, he was a "gentleman," thought not fit to be classed with the sturdy yeoman farmers from whom he was partly sprung. Prudence Holt had committed the awful crime (in the eyes of her people) of marrying an officer, who being quartered at Bletchley, saw her and fell in love with her handsome face; and after giving her a substantial dowry, the Holts turned their backs on her, at which she was unfeignedly thankful, as it left her free to follow her husband's fortunes without let or hindrance.

He did not prove successful, as far as this world's goods were concerned. He won honour and renown, but little more, and when he and she died they left Claude only a bare hundred a year, with a good many expensive habits and luxurious ways.

On her deathbed Prudence Harley endeavoured to console herself with the reflection that her boy was heir-at-law to all Jabez's wealth unless he married, which was most unlikely, as he was then upwards of fifty, and as to making a will, such a thing was unheard of among the Holts. The eldest son took possession of all, and looked after the younger ones.

Death had saved Jabez from this trouble, and swept off his four brothers, Joe, Joe second, and Jabez third and second, as they were dubbed to distinguish them from himself, and left him the last shoot of the old, old family tree, in the direct male line.

CHAPTER II.

"But so fair,
Who takes the breath of man away,
Who gave upon her name."

The busy autumn wore away; the harvest was garnered, the smoke of the trencher pot was seen in the reaper fields, where the cackling geese were amply employed; the mangels were stored, the hay stacked, and yet Jabez could not find time for his visit to "Lannon." There was so much to be done. Old machinery to come down, new machinery to go up; the cattle to be brought to their winter quarters; the sheep from the hill-

sides, where they had passed the genial summer; the turkeys to be fattened for Christmas; the hares and grouse found on his ground to be sold to the greatest advantage; repairs to the house neglected during the busy months seen to; books posted up with help from Rachel—a considerable amount of help—for he was a poor scholar, and she fairly good at figures; and a hundred other things to be attended to; and at last, when the winter snows covering the ground released him from the necessity of hourly attention to his farm, it was close upon Christmas, and he, intent on business, had to mingle and travel with the frivolous folk going South for a holiday to see their loved ones at the merry Christmastide after weeks and months of weary absence and separation.

The journey was a tremendous affair to him, and if possible more tremendous still to Rachel. She dreaded his going, she hardly knew why! A vague idea possessed her that something would happen to him—something that would affect her. For thirty years and more she had been at the farm, for five-and-twenty a widow; and since raised to the proud and important post of housekeeper a hope had trembled in her mind, faintly at first, and then more strongly, that he would marry her, elevate her to the position of mistress of the farm.

She was useful to him, she well knew, in a way his right hand, and she had never spared herself in his service, toiling from morning until night in her endeavours to make him comfortable and preserve his interests. Other men had married their servants, why not he? She came of respectable people, was honest and hard-working; she deserved a reward and thought she might get it, if she would but possess her soul in patience; and now—now there was this dreadful journey to a place hundreds of miles away—a place, too, full of snares and traps for the unwary man, unused to Babylon and its vicious ways.

What could she do? She asked herself, desperately, and was fain to answer nothing. She had tried her best to dissuade him from this trip to an unknown and dreadful land, but all her endeavours were useless. Jabez could save himself some pounds by going to "Lannon," and he wasn't the sort of man to spend one farthing more than he could help; not he, indeed, even if there were wolves, metaphorical and actual, as Rachel said there were, to be met with in the streets of the great city. He could take care of himself pretty well, and he trusted to Munro to look after him. So he departed, and Mrs. Carillon saw him depart with a sinking heart and awful forebodings.

"How long will ye be?" she queried, as he mounted into the gig.

"A week or ten days."

"At most?"

"Ay!" he answered. "Livin' up there's dear enough to hasten me back here."

"Ye'll return, maybe, in time to eat ye Christmas pudden in ye're ain house?"

"Maybe," he returned, stolidly, shaking the reins and setting Peter going; and with a nod he was whirled away out of the sight of the woman, who for once in a way found no solace in scrubbing and cleaning, and stirring up the sturdy wenches under her command to herculean efforts in the way of furbishing and polishing the household gods.

Jabez had travelled so little that he was as much interested in the details of the journey as a young child. The morning engines, the long trains going North, with their load of warmly-coated passengers, the guards, the trucks of luggage—even the porters came in for a share of his admiration; and when at last, after coming by a loop line from Bletchley to Newcastle, he found himself in the express going South at a tremendous pace, he could only sit with his hands on his knees, and his mouth and eyes wide open, staring at the objects that seemed to fly past with such lightning speed.

He dared not get out at York, or any other place at which they stopped, for he had a settled conviction that the moment he left the carriage the train would go on without him; so he

endured agonies of hunger and thirst rather than run such a risk.

The early winter night had closed in over the metropolis when he arrived at King's Cross, and the noise and din at the great station bewildered him not a little.

He stood on the platform helplessly grasping his bag with one hand, and his stout thorn stick with the other, and not knowing in the least what to do, or who to apply to for his old hide-covered box, which had belonged to his grandfather, another Jabez Holt, and which spoke plainly of bygone days; and while in this dilemma, and just as a porter was tardily inquiring "Any luggage?" of this queer-looking, somewhat seedy third-classer, Mark Munro found him out, and swooped down on him with his cheery laugh.

"Well, Holt, arrived safely?"

"Yes, Master Munro, I've have; but my box, I see no sign on it."

"We'll soon find it. What is it like?"

"Brown—brown cow-skin, covered with brass nails, and J. H. plain as a pike-staff on the top o' it. An' I hope it's not bin lost or stolen, 'cos the papers are in it."

"No fear," returned the lawyer, reassuringly; "we'll find it in a brace of shakes."

And he did, there being little difficulty about it; the article in question being unique, and totally unlike anything of the sort seen in London for sixty years, and soon had it hoisted on to a hansom, with Jabez into the same vehicle, and getting in beside him, told the man to drive to Bloomsbury.

It wasn't a very long ride, but to Jabez it seemed like fairyland. The brilliantly lighted shops, decked with their Christmas goods, and the throngs of people, all busy and intent on their marketing, laughing, talking, bargaining, carrying great bundles of glistening holly, and white-berried mistletoe, and parcels of presents for their loved ones—why there hardly seemed room for them all on the pavement; and as to the road, Jabez thought every moment they would come into collision with one of the many swiftly passing vehicles.

"Is it all like this here?" he asked, wonderingly.

"No, not quite. This is a busy and business part of town; where the private houses are its quieter and darker, and as he spoke the cabman turned out of the thoroughfare into the quiet street where Munro lived, and the fairy scene vanished from the old man's eyes.

Still he couldn't forget it, and when dinner was over he begged his host to take him out again, which he did, and Mrs. Mark went too; and Penning, who had made up the party to four at dinner, a meal which Holt couldn't quite understand, and which he took for an elaborate supper, and all were extremely civil and attentive to the rich old man.

Next night they took him to a theatre, and the following day to another entertainment, and were coolly indifferent to the looks of amazement which were cast at them and their queer companion, with his galled legs, and rough homespun clothes.

No one knew better than Mark Munro the exact amount of Jabez's worldly possessions. He, and his father, and his grandfather before that, had managed and arranged all the business matters of the Holt family, and he was aware that this last action of the old family was not partial to his only living relative, Claude Harley.

Harley might never get the property, Jabez might depart from the custom of his ancestors and make a will. There was no knowing, and there was no knowing who might be named legatee. Perhaps himself. The farmer, as far as such a stolid man could, showed pleasure in his society; and he had been ever civil to his client. It did not do for men situated as he was to be brusque and rough. His cheery, happy manner pleased the North countryman, used to the abruptness and testiness of his neighbours; and Solicitor Mark was always cheerful, despite that he lived up to every penny he made, and had nothing to leave his wife and little ones. He found he could not save. It

was so hard, well-nigh impossible to do so, with seven small mouths to feed, besides his own, a wife's and a poor dependent's; for there was yet another member of the lawyer's family whom Jaber had not seen, despite she was destined to be the late, amorously speaking, of this grizzled-headed, elderly farmer.

Munro, when his cousin died, some five years previously, stretched out a helping hand to his only child, left utterly penniless, and Paola Stuart became a member of his family, and looked after the four children then born to him.

The children increased steadily year by year, and so did Paola's labours; still she never grumbled, never showed the terrible weariness she must have felt at being nothing better than a nursemaid to seven troublesome brats, at the changeless routine of washing, dressing, teaching, and playing with them, and then putting them to bed; of being tied to them night and day, as Ixion was tied to the wheel, with never a joy in the present, and never a hope in the future to cheer her on the way.

A colourless life, truly, for a beautiful young woman, whose years had not yet reached twenty-two, whose intellect was above the average, whose warm Southern blood (her mother had been a native of sunny Spain) bounded joyously through her veins, fitting her for a far different kind of existence from that to which a pitiless fate condemned her. What wonder melancholy had stamped her for its own!

The first time Jaber saw her was on Christmas Eve. After dinner Mrs. Munro suggested they should pay a visit to the school-room, and see how the children were getting on with the fire-tree they had to decorate for a party to be given the ensuing week; whereupon Mark asked their guest if that move would be agreeable to him, for the youngsters had been kept sedulously out of his sight and hearing, lest they should annoy and worry him with their lusty shouts and high spirits.

His reply was to the effect that he would like to see the bairns, so they proceeded across sundry passages till they arrived at the schoolroom—a great room, with dim corners and dingy gold moulding, elaborate cornices, and a frescoed ceiling, which represented a stout Diana with bow and arrows disporting herself by the banks of a sedge river in company with sundry satyrs, cupids, nymphs, and other lightly-clothed and negligent mythological folk.

There was not much light in the vast apartment, which would have taken several dozen candles before it could have been properly illuminated; and Jaber was so taken up with the children, who were each presented to him singly, six in number, ranging from ten to two-and-a-half years—the seventh, who only having reached the maturation of twelve months, was slumbering peacefully in its cot in the room above—that he did not take much, if any, notice of the slight, dark figure that Mark had introduced to his notice by a wave of the hand and an introductory "my cousin."

The tree, too, was an object of interest to him; he had never seen one before, that is, he had never seen one in an elaborate pot, with a tinsel fairy wand in hand at the top, and rows of glistening glass balls festooning the branches, and all manner of pretty trifles hung about it.

The old Northumbrian raked a whole string of questions of his juvenile friends. At last his intent was so great that Johnnie, the son and heir, suggested lighting the tapers for a few moments, just to show the general and exquisite effect.

"You had better not," ejaculated Paola.

"May we, dad?" shouted the boy.

"Yes, if you mean to," replied Mark, indignantly.

So the tapers were lighted, and threw a brilliant, if small circle of radiance around, and Paola stood within the circle, and Jaber, raising his eyes to see the tree in all its grandeur, saw this woman in all her beauty, and gazing at her he forgot everything else, the tree and its treasures, the children and their eager questions, his host and hostess, he was oblivious of them all, and stood spellbound, his horny brown hands locked

together, his right foot before the other firmly planted on the ground, his head slightly lifted, and his keen, dark eyes on Paola's face, and she supremely unconscious of the fixed gaze remained in the glare of the candles, eyeing her handiwork with evident satisfaction.

CHAPTER III.

"I have gazed
in a mouth like a blood-red blossom,
And a cheek with no rose's glow,
And a fleece of hair half-brown
From brew to the shoulder's snow."

JABER went to his slumbers, or rather to his couch, for he did not slumber, in a frame of mind difficult to describe. In all the sixty-five years of his uneventful life he had never felt as he did when he gazed at Paola Stuart, never experienced that thrill that ran through him, that glow in his veins, that quickening of the pulse, that longing to look again on a woman's face, to gaze into her eyes, to watch her lips part, to listen to her voice.

They were feelings which most men experience before they have reached their thirtieth year, but he had been much too occupied with sowing, and tilling, reaping and tolling, saving and making to give a thought to women. He knew a woman had brought him into the world, that most likely a woman's hand would smooth his pillows and soothe him when he was going out of it, and that one presided over his house, cooked and spun, and arranged for him, that was all.

They were machines to him—necessary machines—just as much as a plough, or a threshing, or any other farm appendage. He had never thought of them in connection with himself, as wives or lovers; never dreamt of a soft hand locked in his, a smooth-tressed head lying on his breast, while a white arm encircled his throat, and a pair of rosy lips whispered close to his.

Possibly this was because he had never seen anything more lovely than his Alderney prize cow, with her great, gentle eyes, and satiny jet skin. Certainly, the woman he most frequently looked at, Rachel Carillon, was not by any means a beauty, nor one likely to rouse a man's feelings, unless it was a feeling of wonder how anything female could be so hard-looking, unlovely, and repellent.

He was old to be bitten by the love-fever. Yet, the older a man is the worse he takes the disease; the more madly he adores, and the less chance of recovering there is.

There was little chance of recovery in Jaber's case. He was wild to see the pale, statuesque face again, and rose at an absurdly early hour, considering it was midwinter, and that no one appeared in the breakfast-room at Bloomsbury before nine o'clock on Sundays and festival days. Still, he could not rest, and was as well up as toasting about feverishly.

At breakfast he hoped to see her, but was disappointed; and it was not until dinner that his longing eyes were gratified by a sight of her.

This meal took place at three o'clock, but as a heavy fog darkened the atmosphere the blinds were drawn, the lamps lighted, a huge log thrown on the fire, and the Munros sat down in cosy, curtained warmth to discuss their turkey and plum pudding.

Jaber's appetite, for once in a way, failed him, and he did not do justice to the good things that loaded the board.

He was occupied in his contemplation of the woman who sat opposite him, and who, busy seeing to the wants, and keeping in order her little charges, was sublimely unconscious of his fixed gaze and evident admiration.

If he thought her lovely the night before he thought her doubly so now that she was attired with some attempt at smartness.

Her gown was only a shabby black one, with sprigs of holly gleaming redly at her breast, and in her glory raven tresses the vividly-coloured berries showing up the intense pallor of her clear skin, and matching the hue of her small mouth.

With such hair dark eyes are mostly found. Hers were blue, a brilliant, intense blue, fringed with thick black lashes, and over-arched by a pair of brows of the same colour.

Her face was a perfect oval, the features regular; her hands and feet small and exquisitely shaped, her throat well rounded, and through the thin grenadine her snowy polished shoulders could be seen.

"A noble woman, nobly planned!" and though the old Northumbrian had never read those lines, some such thought passed across his mind.

To him the dinner, though a lengthy one, was all too short.

Soon after its conclusion Miss Stuart disappeared, presumably to disrobe and tuck up sundry small Munros. Later on in the evening she reappeared, and delighted Jaber by singing several songs, in a low, rich voice, that thrilled him through and through with its pathos and passion.

He felt a different man as he listened to the sweet tones—youthful, brighter, better.

"Such a lord is love!" and, undoubtedly, he was in love.

The days slipped by, and he gave no thought to his farm, or to returning to those duties he had left. Every evening he managed to find his way to the schoolroom, and as he generally came with his pockets full of sweets, or toys for the tree, he was warmly welcomed by the children; and Paola learned to look for his coming, though he seldom addressed more than a dozen words to her.

No one noticed his admiration for the dependent Mrs. Mark; and she, with a woman's quickness, detected his secret.

"Your client is making a long stay," she observed, one morning, early in the new year, to her husband.

"Yes, I can't make it out," he returned. "Can't you?" she said, with a slight pitying smile at man's woeful ignorance and stupidity over some matters.

"No; the business is all satisfactorily settled that he came up to see me about, and still he stays on day after day."

"Perhaps he likes to have free quarters," she suggested.

"He can't care about that, for just think of the amount he spends in toys and things for the children."

"True. This liberality has astonished me, for you have always told me the Holts were a race of misers."

"Not quite so bad as that. They are close, like a good many border folk—thrifty and economical, more given to saving than spending."

"Then how do you account for this extravagant fit?"

"I can't account for it," returned Mark, helplessly.

"Then you are a goose!" announced his wife.

"Why?"

"Because the reason of it is plain enough."

"Is it?"

"Of course."

"What is the reason, then?"

"Paola!"

"Paola!" he echoed, in astonishment.

"Yes; he is in love with her."

"My dear, how absurd!"

"Why absurd?"

"He is old enough to be her grandfather!"

"And what of that! Men as old—aye, and older—have married younger women. You know there is no fool like an old fool!"

"I know. Still, Jaber Holt I believe to be about the last man in the world to make an idiot of himself."

"He has made an idiot of himself now, then, if adoring Paola is doing that."

"I can't believe it!"

"You don't want to believe it."

"Perhaps not. I always hoped some of his wealth would be left to our little ones."

"Waiting for dead men's shoes is precarious work. They would be much more certain to benefit by it if she became his wife."

"She might have a family of her own," he objected.

"Staff!" returned Mrs. Mark, with supreme contempt. "It would be a capital thing for us."

"You forget what a help she is to you with the children."

"I don't; and I remember, that generous and grateful as she is, that she would help us liberally in the present, and possibly provide for one or two of the children in the future."

"If she could. She might not have it in her power to do so."

"That would rest with you," said his wife, significantly.

"How?"

"You would draw up the marriage settlements."

"Oh! of course," he agreed, with a sudden feeling of admiration for her outeness. "Yet Holt knows what he is about."

"I know that perfectly well. Still, a man in love, especially an elderly man, is hardly a rational animal, or responsible for his actions."

"Perhaps you are right."

"I know I am. Be judicious, Mark. Throw no obstacles in the way; help where you can; get the management of affairs into your own hands, and, believe me, we shall not regret it."

"I will do my best," he replied.

And he kept his word. He talked of his cousin to his guest, and encouraged him to speak of her, which Jabez was singularly reluctant to do, till something occurred that spurred him on to action, and roused his jealous fears.

The children's party took place on Twelfth Night, and to it also came some score of grown-ups, who danced, and laughed, and enjoyed themselves every bit as much as the children.

Paola was the acknowledged belle of the assembly, and most of the gentlemen paid her great attention, Walter Penning being first in the field, and most marked in his attendance.

Time after time he danced with her, and time after time Jabez found himself wishing that he was young and goodly to look at, and that he could put his arm round Paola's slender waist and guide her through the many intricacies of the dance as Penning did. He did get a Sir Roger with her and floundered about in it after an elephantine fashion that evoked laughter from the other guests, and much secret merriment.

Still, it wasn't like a waltz, and everyone else seemed to get just as much of his partner as he did.

But what finally decided him to speak out was hearing Penning say that he wanted to speak to Miss Stuart on a very serious matter, one of great moment to himself, on the Sunday following. That was Wednesday. Jabez mentally registered an oath that before Saturday he would have Paola's yes or nay to his own question.

He hardly knew how to go to work in the matter; he was such a tyro in love affairs, and the asking for and giving in marriage; still he did know that it would not be his fault if he went back alone to his quaint old farm in Northumbria.

It could never be the same to him unless this woman whom he loved with all the strength and fervour of his old age; the garnered-up strength, for he had never wasted his affection on others, would come to gladden it with her beauty, and shed the sunshine of her bright presence around his home.

The morning after the dance he sought the solicitor, not without sundry tremors, quite foreign to his usual imperturbable calm, in the retreat of his own private room, and, with many a blunder and many a stammer, opened his heart to him. Mark received his communication with professional caution, and after a considerable time gave his consent to Jabez paying his addresses to his cousin; this, be it understood, after Holt had told he would settle five thousand pounds absolutely on his bride, and after asking him to pave the way for him with the lady, which he promised to do forthwith, for the suitor was ardent and eager, and could brook no delay.

"Paola," said Mark, entering the nursery, where she was sitting busily engaged making a

small frock and watching a couple of small children playing at her feet. "I have something to say to you."

"Yes," she returned, interrogatively, with a swift, almost fearful glance up at him, for she knew the narrowness of his income, and feared from day to day that she would have to go and earn her bread amidst strangers which she dreaded; for though she had much to do, and was busy from morning till night, still her cousin and his wife were very kind to her, and never treated her as anything save a sister, and a dear one too. "What is it?"

"Some one has been talking to me about you."

"Indeed! Who?"

"Mr. Holt."

"Mr. Holt!" she repeated in astonishment.

"Yes. Are you surprised?"

"Very much so. What can he have to say about me?"

"A great deal. In fact he has proposed for you—wants you to be his wife."

"Oh! Mark!" a rosy blush stole over her pale face from brow to chin.

"Don't you like him?" he asked, abruptly.

"I—I—think—he is—very nice as—a friend," she faltered.

"And that he would not be as a husband?"

"I—have not—thought of him—in that light."

"Well, will you do so now? Will you consider his proposal, with its advantages and disadvantages? He is rich, and will settle five thousand pounds on you; he has a charming house, and a flourishing farm in the North. You will have ease, comfort, plenty. On the other hand, he is old enough to be your father, and old people are apt to be exacting. He wants his answer by Saturday morning, so you have two whole days to think it over," and with that Solicitor Mark withdrew, and left his cousin to her maiden meditations, which were not altogether pleasant.

She shrank, somehow, from the thought of passing her life with Jabez. He was old, rough, unsympathetic, according to her way of thinking; and what woman does not dream of a lover ultimately to be her husband, with dark eyes, fine features, a good figure, and a fascinating manner? An ideal like unto this had flitted across her brain, and it was a little hard to put Jabez in the niche devoted to the mental Adonis.

Still, five thousand meant provision for her future and declining days, and in the present life was not all roses for her.

She was often terribly tired and cross, often longed for a little quiet and rest; away from the incessant babble of baby voices, the incessant demands on her care and attention. There were seven little tyrants now to torment her, and another would make its appearance when the spring violets bloomed. Could she bear it always—this life which would grow harder and harder as each year passed, the ceaseless drudgery, the weary monotony, and then at the end nothing but the prospect of death in the workhouse!

She hardly knew as she sat there revolving the matter in her mind, and Mrs. Munro found her several hours later, still undecided and uncertain as to the answer she should give.

"Then you have not made up your mind yet?" said that astute lady, determined that it should be made up soon, and as she wished it too.

"No, not yet," returned Paola, blushing and embarrassed.

"I hope you intend to be sensible about it, my dear, and do what will be best for yourself. Though I and the children will miss you terribly, still I must advise you to accept Mr. Holt. The advantages are all on your side. He is a nice old gentleman, has the sense you possibly lack, as most young folks do, and will be more attentive and devoted than any wild, harum-scarum young fellow"—Mrs. Mark was thinking of Penning, who as a cousin-in-law could be no possible advantage to her, and was never likely to make, or at any rate to save,

much. "He is evidently deeply attached to you, and will make a fond husband."

Paola shuddered a little at this.

"Then," continued her companion, "think of the settlements. Five thousand pounds means between two and three hundred a year for you—a competence—wealth to a girl like yourself who has never known what luxury is!"

"True," murmured the listener.

"And that is not all. There is more to follow. You will be mistress of a charming place. Mark says the farm is the quaintest, prettiest house he has ever seen. You will have servants to wait on you, carriages to drive about in, will visit and be visited, and perhaps be given diamonds and costly ornaments, besides heaps of beautiful clothes."

She was romancing a wee bit here, drawing on her own imagination, which was a lively one, but it didn't matter to her. She wanted to see her cousin Mrs. Holt, and she spared no argument, no trouble, to bring about that much desired end.

For two days she scolded, coaxed, and urged Paola; and, finally, on the Saturday morning Jabez was overjoyed by receiving a consent to his proposal, and hearing a trembling "Yes" from his ladylove's beautiful lips.

He did not kiss her, fortunately for her, contented himself with holding her hand, and gazing at the shy, blushing face, and feeling altogether different from anything he had felt like before.

He wasn't going to wait. Why should he? A home was waiting the bride, money plentiful, shops conveniently near, everything could be got ready soon. And it was. On the fourteenth of February, when the winter snows were melting a little under the genial rays of the sun, and the birds were pairing, twittering, and quarrelling, billing and cooing under the eaves and amid the chimney-stacks, Paola Stuart stood at the altar by Jabez Holt's side in a dim, old City church, and they twain were made one, for richer for poorer, for better for worse, till death did them part, and after a light breakfast at the Bloomsbury house the newly-wedded pair started for a honeymoon of a fortnight's length at Brighton, which trip had been arranged in all its details by Mrs. Mark, who managed Jabez with consummate skill and got him to do exactly as she pleased, even to the free spending of his beloved guineas, and the ordering of a superfine black coat and vest, and a pair of pepper-and-salt unmentionables, and the discarding of his homespun and gaiters, which she rightly concluded would attract considerable attention at a fashionable watering-place.

CHAPTER IV.

"Down in the valley the meads are white,
Hiding the plain in a shadow deep,
High on the hillside the sun shines bright,
Over the summit the breezes sweep,
Swaying the trees with their tough unseen,
Stirring the streams as they come and go;
Who can forget them who once has been
Out on the hills when the March winds blow?"

THE December snows covered the ground like a thick white fall when Jabez left his farmstead, the March winds played hide-and-seek amid the fir and tall poplars, and screeched and roared down the wide chimneys ere he thought of returning.

Such a prolonged absence from home on the part of the master was an unprecedented affair in the annals of the Holt family.

Who had ever heard of the place being left to itself for three months? Actually three months without the eye of its possessor to detect errors, and backslidings, and to promptly punish them.

Certainly not his cronies at the Three Ring—nor his labourers and servants, nor his house-keeper, the woman who sat with knitted brows and compressed lips, and deathly face, gazing at the flames of the fire as they leapt upwards, hungrily licking the bars and brickwork, for she had piled on coals and logs making a huge fire to keep out the cold that was in her heart, and soul, and body, and which had nothing to do with the chill breezes that swept around the house.

For nearly a month Rachel Carrillon had felt

that queer chill in her veins, had been a changed woman; and the change dated from a certain morning in February, when she received a clumsy looking, ill-written letter from her master, announcing his marriage, his intention of returning early in March, and his desire that the best bed-room should be got ready and made smart, the house generally brightened and smartened for the reception of "Mrs. Holt."

That letter came as a crushing blow to the hard-featured, elderly woman, who had built her hopes on Jabez, who had toiled and milled, and slaved from rosy morn to dewy eve to please and further the interests of this man who, regardless of her labour and toil, forgot her, and her work and devotion at the first glance from a bright eye, the first sound of a sweet voice.

It was terribly bitter—gall and wormwood to this one who had laboured for him. Nothing had been too hard, too arduous for her to do.

When the cows were sick she sat up at night with them; when an ewe lambed in cold, bleak weather, 'twas she who wrapped up the little one in flannel and brought it into the kitchen for that warmth and comfort which was its only chance; when the chicks were hatched she rose at early dawn to prepare their warm mash; in the hay-field she was never absent if business called Jabez elsewhere; at the harvest time she kept a sharp look-out on the reapers to see that they did not take too much to incapacitate them from work.

'Twas she who superintended the feeding of his celebrated breed of pigs, and cured the far-famed hams that fetched such high prices. 'Twas she who packed the fruit for market and churned the creamy butter, and made the cheeses and the huge loaves.

'Twas she, in fact, who was the ruling spirit in the Holt Farm, and the one who had helped Jabez to heap up riches; and these riches were now to be spent on another, and all her rosy dreams of a comfortable future, of a happy, easy old age were rudely dispelled, her castles in the air razed to the ground at one fell blow.

It maddened her; the disappointment, the thought that she must stand aside, play second to another's lead, serve where she had ruled, be subservient to another woman, an usurper, an interloper, one who had never done a thing to further the interests of the man who had been fool enough to marry her, to give her the right to spend his hard-earned earnings, and trample upon his faithful servants.

"Heavens! How I hate her!" muttered Rachel, venomously, clenching her hands and grinding her teeth, her face distorted by fury, till it resembled nothing human, and was absolutely diabolical. "Some tow-haired dolly, w! a pink face an' a mince's tongue. I could kill her! ay, and him too!" she added, grimly, a sinister gleam in her stony eyes. "I'll watch the hussy!" she went on, gloomily. "I'll watch her day an' night! Nought a thin' she does or says shall escape me! I'll work her ruin! An' I can! I'll bring her down till she lies like a worm at my feet! She ain't married ter master for love. I'll be sworn there's a gallant in the background that she cares mair for than old Jabez Holt!" and, easing her mind by this announcement, she rose, and commenced to lay the table for tea.

As she was thus occupied a tap-tapping was heard at the window.

"To branches strikin' ag'in it," she murmured, going on with her preparations, after one upward glance; but, after a moment, the tapping was renewed more vigorously.

"What's there!" she demanded, flinging open the casement, and looking out, despite the rush of white vapour mist that forced its way in, and bathed her face and head in its humidity.

"Only I, Meecess Carillon!" answered a thick, husky voice from without.

"Peter Royle!" she interrogated.

"Ay!" returned the voice.

"An' wha's wantin'!"

"Has the master come hame?"

"Na, to master he na."

"An' when may ye be expectin' him?"

"I dunno."

"Ta-morrer!"

"I tell ye I dunno for certain! But coome

in; te mist is shockin'-like te night. Ye can say wha' ye ha' te say inside more comfortable than there."

"Ay, that I can!" and in a few moments the door swung open, and a tall, muscular man entered, clad in garments somewhat similar to those worn by Jabez when at his northern home, but of inferior quality and much worn, and frayed, and patched, showing that fortune rather frowned than smiled on him, and was niggardly in the way of golden gifts.

"Ah! that's better nor standin' out there!" he exclaimed, nodding towards the window, across which Rachel had drawn the thick red curtains, thereby adding to the cosy appearance of the quaint room, ruddily lighted by the fire-glow.

"Ay, it's cold work out in te mists! Sit ye doon! and say, wha' will ye soups! Na, a dish o' tea, I'm thinkin'."

"Na!" he laughed, shaking his great head, with its forest of tawny locks; "tea's na much in my line!"

"Mebbe, a tankard of home-brewed would be!" she suggested.

"Ay, more like!" he agreed.

"An' wha' may ye be wantin' w! te master?" she inquired, after a time, when he had drunk the beer down to a peg or two, and demolished a plentiful plate of ham.

"Te usual thing," he answered, rather shamefully.

"Money!"

"Ay!"

"An' wha' ha' ye to sell now?"

"Na much."

"Sa I suppose ye've sold most a' ye ha'?"

"Ay, wusser to luck!"

"Ye ain't had much luck, ha' ye, Pete!" she said, with a rough attempt at kindness, for Royle was one of her few favourites, and she felt, in her own queer way, a sort of pity for him.

"Na, none at a'; I've been powerfu' on-lucky."

"Ay, that ye ha'; nothin's prospered w! ye."

"Nathin'!" he assented, with a deep sigh, that seemed actually to shake his massive frame; "nathin' this folve-and-twenty year!"

"Ye were lucky enou' before that," she remarked, significantly.

"Ay, before na' since!" he returned, with considerable bitterness.

"An' ha' ye never heard tale or tidin's fra Janet?"

"Na, never," he said, turning away his head, and shading his face with his hand, while a deep, crimson flush stole up to the very roots of his tawny hair, and an indescribable look came into his eyes, for there was a story of shame and sorrow and ruin attached to his sister's name.

Hepzibah and German Royle had been a hard-working, industrious couple. Their farm on Roper's Hill, some two miles from the Holts, was prosperous and well-conducted, and they owned a considerable amount of pasture land around on which their sleek beasts grazed. When they died they left all they possessed to their son, Peter Royle, with a strict injunction to give their only other child, Janet, a liberal dowry when she married, which they thought she was sure to do some day, for she was a comely lass.

This Peter was quite ready to do, for he was tenderly attached to his pretty, fair-haired, blue-eyed sister; and matters went on flourishingly at the homestead until she reached her twenty-second, and he his twenty-fifth year. Then a cloud began to obscure the horizon. There was something wrong with Janet. She lost her spirits, and her fine colour; her eyes grew anxious and misty, and she was silent and sad, altogether different from her usual self.

Peter in his rare intervals of rest asked her what was the matter, but she put him off, and evaded his queries; and he, busied and occupied, forgot his half-formed fears, and accepted her excuses, till one night on his return from the fields he found her gone—the sister he loved so well, who made his home bright and his life joyous, for whom he laboured and toiled, that

he might add to that left by his parents, and give her more when she went to a home of her own—gone without a word of farewell, a simple line of adieu—gone, too, the neighbours said because she could no longer conceal her shame and disgrace. Peter was well-nigh mad with sorrow and distress, but he clung wildly to the belief that she had gone away to marry some one—a scamp, probably, whom she knew he would not approve of.

He would not believe her shame, and worked harder than ever to amass wealth; till one cold, dreary night in the winter following her flight the feeble cry of an infant was heard, and when he arose and went down he found a baby wrapped in a cloak at his threshold, and a broken-hearted letter from Janet, begging his pity for her child, and saying both she and it were heartlessly deserted by the man who had ruined her. For herself she asked nothing. She had sinned, and must bear the burden, no matter how heavy; her innocent offspring was a different thing. She would never, could never face her brother, and she told him he would not see or hear of her again.

Peter took in the child, which only lived a few days, exposure on such a severe night killing it, and swore that if ever he could find the man who had ruined his sister he would kill him like a dog; and from that night when he learnt the truth he began to go down the hill. He neglected his farm in his search after the destroyer of his peace and honour, and when baffled in his pursuit he took to drink, and gradually things went from bad to worse with him. Nothing prospered or flourished with him.

His sheep got the disease, and his cattle sickened and died, and hay and wheat crops failed. Bit by bit he parted with the land his parents worked so hard to purchase; little by little his balance at the bankers decreased, his stock grew less, his substance faded away; and at last nothing remained to him save the old house on the hill, with its quaint furniture, and some rare bits of china, heirlooms that had been in the family for generations.

As his fortunes declined so Jabez Holt's rose, and most of his land had been purchased by the latter, most of his sleek heifers and fat lambs, and valuable horses, those that disease spared, and at anything but a high price.

Jabez knew how to drive a hard bargain, and he drove hard ones with Peter Royle, who was too poor, and too much pressed for money to resist, and who was at his mercy.

Peter hardly loved Jabez, and would willingly have sold his goods and chattels into other hands; but times were bad with the farmers, and it was not many of them who could pay down ready money, like Jabez could, who had only to put his name to a cheque, and hand it over to the seller.

So he went again and again to him, and saw, with many a pang and many a heartburn, all that was his and all that he most prized become the property of another, and that other a man he disliked.

Still, the old saw of beggars not being able to be choosers held good in his case, and he was there again to offer his possessions for his neighbour's purchase, because there was not anyone else who wanted them.

Chelsea figures, Salopian cups, and Worcester teapots were not much in the rough Northumbrian's line. He had heard of Jabez's marriage, that his wife was town bred, and thought, perhaps, she might fancy these gimcracks, that were worth so much, and looked of so little value.

"Now, that's wa' I ca' odd," said Rachel, after a lengthy pause, during which she kept her light eyes on her companion with strange fixity.

"Yes, 'tis odd," he agreed.

And it truly was so. In all those five-and-twenty years he had never heard of his sister, or received one line from her. He did not know what her fate was. Whether she had perished in the snow that inclement night, and so ended her shamed existence; whether she had gone to the great city to sink deeper and deeper in the mire of misery and sin he could not tell. He

only knew that in his boundless love he would have forgiven her all, have taken her back to his heart, and have started afresh in a foreign land, with some object to work for, something filling and cheering his desolate life, had she come to him. But the days became weeks, the weeks months, the months years, and the years rolled away without bringing tale of tidings of the wanderer.

"An' so to master's married?" he said, abruptly, to change the subject, which was so intensely painful to him.

"Ay, he's married," assented the woman, shortly, and now it was her turn to move her head, and shade her face from the brilliant fire-glow, which showed too plainly her change of expression, though she might have saved herself the trouble; for neither Peter, nor any of the folk about, thought for an instant that plain, prosaic, elderly Rachel Carillon had cast her eyes with matrimonial intent on her master, or aspired to become mistress and part possessor of the best farm in the neighbourhood.

"An' to a Lannon leddy?"

"Laddy, indeed!" she retorted, shortly; "na leddy I should say."

"Wha' then?"

"I dunno."

"Has he made a fool o' himself?"

"I dunno, I tell ye. Wait until ye sees her yersel', then ye can judge whether he has or na."

"Mebbe, I should na ken."

"Then 'tis ye must be to fule," she said, soothly.

"Maybe," he acknowledged. "But when I was in Lannon I could na tell to good folk frae to bad. They all looked alike, dressed smart and fine."

"Fine feathers make fine birds," she snapped, sententiously.

"You're right there, Meecess Carillon."

"Mebbe, master's bird will ha' a foina plumage!"

"Most like," he answered, laconically.

"An' put us all to shame," with a savage glance at her woollen gown.

"She canna do that," he said, slowly, as he rose to go. "Honesty's oftentimes clothed in hoddin grey."

"An' vice in satins," she replied, significantly.

"Ay. Let me know when he comes back."

"Yers well. I'll send ye word."

"Thanks; an' good-night to ye."

"Good-night," and after he was gone, his burly form lost to sight amid the white mists, she stood in the doorway for full ten minutes, her candle flickering in the draught, her eyes fixed on space, and an evil look on her ugly face, that meant mischief to someone—most likely to Jabes Holt's young wife.

(To be concluded in our next)

A DELIGHTFUL BLUNDER.

—103—

It was a very jolly crowd which stood waiting at the Silverthorne station for the seven o'clock train, that frosty November morning.

One might have thought that seven was rather an early hour for so large and exceptionally gay a gathering—especially as only one of the party was to take the train, the remaining sixteen having assembled merely to "see her off."

But for a better informed person, the fact that one was Ida Terrill would have been a sufficient explanation.

That young lady had come to Silverthorne on a visit to her aunt four months previous; and Silverthorne society had given her the warmest welcome imaginable. There had been a furious run of parties and parties all the summer. Silverthorne had never been so lively; for Miss Terrill had "taken" immensely, and society had exerted itself in her behalf.

The heroine of the occasion stood in the midst of the chattering throng, entirely bewitching in her snug brown ulster, tossing back laughing smiles to the chorus of sallies aimed at her.

Charley Whitlock was pretending to cry into

his pocket handkerchief. George Becker, lolling across a seat with his hair rubbed up wildly, was simulating a fit of insanity brought about by Miss Terrill's departure.

The train came puffing up.

"You'll surely come back next summer," cried all the girls together.

There was a confusion of kisses and hand-shakings, the masculine portion affecting violent indignation that they were excluded from the former.

Miss Terrill's uncle, who was to see her safe to the junction at Crosby, where she was to change carriages, hurried her into the train. And the flutter of a handkerchief from a window was all that was left to the group on the platform.

Charley Whitlock and Lizzie Cavins walked away together, of course. They had been engaged all the summer, and were to be married soon.

"Poor Arthur!" said the girl, looking after a tall form, which had detached itself from the group, and was taking a solitary course up the street.

"Yes—poor Gifford!" said her lover, compassionately. "What made her throw him over, anyhow? I've never had the rights of the case. But I suppose you know!"

"Yes; she told me all about it. She's the most conscientious girl in the world—Ida Terrill. She refused him simply because she wasn't quite sure she liked him well enough to marry him. She said she'd be doing him a wrong if she married him without being certain; so she rejected him."

Charley gave a musing whistle.

"She's rejected a mighty nice fellow," he declared.

"Yes; I told her so. I tried to make her change her mind, but she wouldn't. Do you know—I oughtn't to say it—but I've imagined two or three times that she had come to care for him a little. You see, the longer you know Arthur Gifford the better you like him, and it was two months ago that she refused him. Well, I don't know!" Lizzie concluded, dubiously.

Ida Terrill, meanwhile, was spinning towards Crosby. Her uncle had taken from the paper-boy a magazine for her and a newspaper for himself, and was already absorbed in the political aspect.

Ida turned the leaves of the pamphlet listlessly, closing it at last, and allowing her eyes to wander among her fellow-passengers—rather an uninteresting set, she concluded. Then she rested her elbow on the window-ledge and her pretty chin on her hand, and looked out somewhat absently.

"Had she made a mistake?" she thought.

"Was she sorry she had refused him?" No, surely not. How could she have accepted him when she had not cared for him! There were plenty of proofs that she had not cared for him.

According to the best authorities, she should have turned red and pale by turns at his approach, and her heart should have substantially increased its palpitations; she should have been madly jealous at seeing him with anybody else; she should have thought of him by day and dreamed of him by night—if she had cared for him. But she had had none of these symptoms.

Of course, she reflected, as she sped by houses, and fences, and fields, she had appreciated him. She had known—as who did not!—that he was very pleasant, very gentlemanly, very entertaining. And his behaviour, after his rejection, had been nothing less than sublime. He had, as it were, ignored it, continuing to devote himself to her with the same genial willingness, and never again referring to the embarrassing topic.

She should miss him—she owned that. She should think of him in the measure of the waltz—there was nobody at home who could dance quite so well; she should think of him on cool, bright mornings—he had driven her out so often on such days—and on warm afternoons, like those they had spent together in his row-boat, or on the leafy porch; she should certainly think of him on moonlight evenings—

Ida stopped herself half-angrily, and gave a determined attention to her book. Perhaps the

words were obscured for a moment by a slight mist which had somehow risen in her soft eyes; but it was only for a moment.

It was nine when they drew up in Crosby.

"You'll take the next train back, won't you, Uncle Stephen?" said Ida, as they crossed the several intervening tracks to the waiting-room. "I've a good while to wait for my train, you know. You won't need to wait with me."

"Well, I don't know—I don't know," said Uncle Stephen, irresolutely. "No hurry."

He was a dreamy little man, with a scholarly face and big, near-sighted eyes. He was vague and unpractical to the last degree. To be sure, a person of his ample means could afford to be unpractical.

"I'll just see when your train leaves," said Uncle Stephen, presently, putting Ida into a seat and disappearing towards the ticket-window.

He came back hastily.

"It leaves in ten minutes," he announced. "I'll put you in it now."

"Ten minutes!" Ida repeated, following him wonderingly.

According to the time-table which she had studied before starting, she should have waited an hour and a-half for her train.

She mentioned the fact to her uncle.

"Ob, it's all right," he assured her, easily.

"It's the train for Chilton. I inquired."

He found a seat for her, chatted until the warning whistle sounded, and bade her goodbye.

Ida leaned back and watched the slowly-receding station rather wearily. She was not especially fond of travelling—certainly not of travelling alone. She wished the day were done with, and she were at home.

She was not sure that she did not wish she had never come. Of course, she had had a charming time. But that had made the coming away all the harder.

She had so hated to leave it all! She did not ask herself what, or whom it was that she most regretted leaving.

The Inspector's demand for her ticket broke up these lugubrious reveries. He gave it a glance, and then said, with a solemnity befitting the occasion,—

"You're in the wrong train, miss. This ticket is for Wellington."

Ida returned his half-amused look with a gaze of dismayed bewilderment.

"What shall I do?" she said, faintly.

The Inspector was young, and by no means proof against a perfect face and pleading grey eyes. He leaned towards her, sympathetically.

"Your train," he said, "won't leave Crosby till half-past ten. You can get out at the next station and take the ten o'clock express back there in time to catch it."

He passed by with a reassuring nod.

Ida resigned herself with a sigh.

How exactly like Uncle Stephen the blunder had been! If she had been alone, she would never have made the mistake. She would have held fast to the time-table, and there would have been no such dreadful balk. She felt something of exasperation.

The guard assisted her from the carriage at the next station.

"You've only half an hour to wait," he said, encouragingly, having been told of her dilemma.

Half-an-hour—yes; but half-an-hour in a dreadful little station, with dusty benches, a splintery floor and grimy windows, was not so amusing.

Ida was the sole occupant of the small room. She could hardly have told, afterwards, how she passed the time.

She sat down in one of the uncomfortable seats and counted the boards in the floor; she scratched her name on the window with the small diamond in her ring—a proceeding which, under any other circumstances, she would have condemned as highly ill-bred; and she went out and paced up and down the little platform.

A house just visible down the road reminded her faintly of Uncle Stephen's, and her thoughts

roved back over the past summer, and naturally to Arthur Gifford.

After all, she mused, he was rather an odd person. Almost anybody else would have made another attempt, in spite of a first refusal. She could think of a dozen girls who had married the very persons they had at first rejected.

Not that she should have accepted Mr. Gifford in any case; but it was certainly queer—his never having tried again. Perhaps he had not wanted to. Yes, that was it; he had not cared to. Probably he had been glad, on second thoughts, that she had refused him. Undoubtedly.

The passengers in the train which stopped presently noted a soft pensiveness in the pretty young lady who entered.

A young husband whispered to his wife that she must have suffered the recent loss of a near and dear relative; but she responded that a brown dress, a hat in varying tints of yellow, and saffron-coloured gloves, were hardly compatible with that theory.

Ida's depression remained a mystery.

Almost the first person she saw at the bustling Crosby junction was Uncle Stephen, walking aimlessly up and down. He stared at her vaguely, as she placed her hand on his arm, with a bewildered "Bless my soul!"

Ida explained the situation briefly, and—be it said to her credit—with perfect good nature; but Uncle Stephen was overcome with remorse.

"What a blunder!" he ejaculated. "Bless me! how could I have made it!"

The idea flitted through his niece's head that he was precisely the person most likely to have made it, but she merely smiled.

"I mustn't miss my train now, at any rate," she said. "It must be very nearly time for it."

"Yes, yes!" rejoined Uncle Stephen. "Certainly. I'll see about it right away."

His near-sighted eyes roving about the junction, caught sight of an old gentleman from Silverthorne, a special friend of his.

"Well, there's Channing—haven't seen him for a week!" he ejaculated. "Just wait till I speak to him a moment," and he darted off.

Ida waited five minutes—ten. A train moved slowly out. Could it have been hers? Ida grew rather nervous. She knitted her brows, hesitated, and finally joined her uncle.

"Ah, your train, my dear!" said Uncle Stephen, briskly, as he perceived her. "I'll see about it."

He started off with a business-like air, but he came back slowly.

"It's gone!" he announced, in a dazed way. "Went just this minute, they say. I don't see how it happened; I never made such a blunder before."

Ida gasped, and stood staring at her uncle in despairing helplessness. Then, pulling herself together, she turned to a railroad official standing near, who said, glancing at her ticket, in response to her agitated inquiry, that her next available train was due at one.

Two hours and a-half! But there is no help for it.

She should not feel safe, however, till Uncle Stephen was well out of the way; she felt that he was quite capable of leading her into a third blunder.

She interrupted his flood of speculations as to how the mistake could have occurred.

"You mustn't wait for me, you know," she said, with heroic sweetness; "and you'd better take your train now, so as to be sure of it. It's already made up."

She took his arm and fairly put him into the train; she saw him select a seat inside and open a paper, and knew that he had already arrived at a peaceful unconsciousness of her very existence. Then she went into the waiting-room and sat down.

Two hours and a-half! She would not be at home till late in the evening, when they would have given up expecting her. What a dreadful day it had been!

She wondered that she was still alive; she wondered whether her hair would not have turned a little gray by the time she reached home

—if she ever did. She leaned back and closed her eyes despairingly.

Somehow Arthur Gifford was still uppermost in her mind. She took up her reflections where she had left off before. Yes, of course, that was the explanation—he had congratulated himself upon escaping her. If he hadn't, would he not have asked her again? To be sure he would! He had never cared for her—it was perfectly plain that he hadn't. It was probable that he had even disliked her. Well, she was glad she had refused him—she was thankful!

Nevertheless, she took out her handkerchief and wiped a certain moisture from her eyes. When she looked up, wearily, she gave a violent start, and her pretty, pensive face grew brightly red.

Arthur Gifford was standing some three feet away, and looking directly at her. He came forward immediately and sat down beside her.

Ida bit her lip. But the sight of his friendly face had the old effect of bringing a lump into her throat and tears to her eyes. She pressed her handkerchief to them hastily, and went and stood by a window. And Arthur Gifford followed.

"Oh, what is the matter?" he whispered, bending anxiously over her, quite forgetting the strange fact of her presence there in his tender distress.

"I don't know," said Ida, helplessly, looking up at him timidly through her tears.

That look was too much for the young man.

"I can't help it—I can't help it!" he burst out. "I want you! I can't live without you! There, I had made up my mind never to trouble you again—"

He looked down at her.

"Oh, you do care for me!" he cried, rather wildly. "Say it!"

"Yes, I do," said Ida, firmly.

For there was no longer a doubt in her mind on that point.

There was a little silence. The hand-clasp, which in the publicity of the place was all that could be exchanged, seemed woefully inadequate.

"You haven't asked me how I come to be here," said the girl, perhaps to cover the joyful thumping of her heart; and she related her misfortunes eloquently.

"I ought to sympathise," said her lover. "I ought to be politely sorry, but I'm not. I consider it a direct interposition of Providence—your getting left, and my happening to come here on business. For think what has come of it, dear!"

The two hours and a half passed away with remarkable quickness after all. When Ida said good-bye to her lover from the carriage-window she could hardly believe that it had really been so long.

She pondered over the phenomenon for several minutes, when she was fairly on her way; but she forgot it presently in happy speculations as to how they would take the news at home (but, of course, it would be all right when once they had seen him) and what the girls at Silverthorne would say when they knew she was coming back there for good.

A GOOD CATCH.

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"MR. AINSLEY ARBUTHNOT" was the name beautifully engraved on the elegant visiting-card which a servant presented to Evelyn Ogden, as she stood before a tall pier glass, admiring the sweep of her white satin train, and the wave of her glossy black hair.

"You are ready, I suppose, Sybil!" she asked, with a disdainful glance at her shy little cousin, whose modest toilette of wine-coloured cashmere hardly suited Miss Evelyn's elaborate taste.

"Oh, yes!" Sybil answered, promptly. "I have been ready for some time."

"Why don't you put some white lace around your neck?" Evelyn asked, critically. "You look so—oh, so plain."

She was going to say "countryified," but repented of that and amended her speech.

"I haven't any lace," Sybil said, frankly.

"I'll lend you my fichu," said Evelyn, less in a spirit of generosity than in a wish to have Sybil look semi-respectable.

"Thanks," was the gentle reply; "but I would rather not borrow any fine feathers, Evelyn dear. Don't mind me. I couldn't look anything but plain if I tried, and it will suit me better to creep into a quiet corner where no one will see me. I can enjoy your triumphs, cousin, for I am sure you will have them. You look beautiful to-night!"

"Do you think so?" said Evelyn, with a conscious glance towards the mirror. "I am glad this dress is so becoming. Mr. Arbuthnot adores white."

"I almost wish I hadn't said I would go," observed Sybil, looking down at her own plain dress. "I am afraid I shall disgrace you, Evelyn. I don't even know how to behave, for I never heard of a progressive-angling party before."

"Oh, it's simple enough!" said Evelyn, buttoning her long gloves. "There will be a lot of tubs, or punch bowls probably, and we will all have gill-fishing-rods and lines, with hooks on them. The fish are hollow, and have prizes inside. We all fish for them, and nobody knows what he is going to get till the fish are opened. There is to be a gold ring in one to-night, they say. It will be like wedding-cake. But you needn't worry, Sybil; I'll tell you what to do."

Sybil was not worrying. She was perfectly quiet—in fact, so much so, that Evelyn fancied her brilliant escort would not be at all pleased with this unexpected addition to their party.

Sybil had come to London to try and get a position as a teacher, and Evelyn did not fancy taking her out in society; but Mr. Ogden had a tender feeling for his sister's child, and commanded his daughter to show her all the honours due to a distinguished guest.

"My cousin, Miss Weir, Mr. Arbuthnot," said Evelyn, presenting Sybil to the gentleman who awaited them in the parlour.

Ainsley Arbuthnot's keen eyes had swept in an instant over the white satin gown, with the mental observation,—

"Overdressed!"

They rested now upon the slender, little figure in the soft, rich-coloured cashmere, and they lighted with genuine admiration.

"I am pleased to make your acquaintance, Miss Weir," he said, with that quiet yet impressive manner which is such a valuable gift.

Sybil murmured something, but her eyelids fell before that magnetic glance.

How handsome he was, and how perfectly self-possessed! It was no wonder that Evelyn was always talking about Ainsley Arbuthnot.

He was rich, too, they said, though Sybil thought very little about wealth, save as some far-away thing which she would probably never possess in all her lifetime.

The "progressive angling" went on at Mrs. Bayard's house, where Sybil felt as though she were in fairyland, among flowers and fragrance, and parti-coloured lights, that shone on a crowd of elegantly-dressed men and women, who moved about in a scene of rare beauty and splendour.

"Must I fish too?" Sybil asked, nervously, as she looked shyly at the superb out-glass bowls in which artificial goldfish were swimming in perfumed water. "I would rather not."

"Don't be afraid," said Arbuthnot, kindly.

"They all make botches of it."

"Aren't you going to fish, Arbuthnot?" called out an exquisite youth, who wore a primrose and an eyeglass. "It's no end of a lark, 'pon honour! It's such fun to see these stupid little tin things wriggle!"

"Is it, really?" said Arbuthnot, with imperturbable gravity, while the speaker began to dangle his absurd little line in the water.

"Do you know what that makes me think of?" he continued, in a low tone, which only Sybil heard. "It reminds me of a definition which I once heard given for a fishing-rod—a

stick with a worm at one end and a fool at the other."

Sybil broke out into a merry laugh, which made Evelyn turn round to see what the fun was.

"Won't you try now?" said Mr. Arbuthnot. "There are not very many people at the table."

"Yes," said Evelyn, sweetly; "let us try now, by all means. Do you know, Mr. Arbuthnot, there is to be a dance after the fishing, and we ladies have to fish our partners out of yonder bowl?"

"How momentous!" Arbuthnot exclaimed. "I hope heaven may be kind to me."

Evelyn smiled at him, and Sybil, having a sense of being in the way, moved towards the table.

"Come, ladies!" cried the youth with these eye-glances. "There are as good fish in the sea as ever yet were caught."

"Allow me!" said Dick Travers, a brother of the hostess, to whom Sybil had been presented, and she found herself in possession of one of the gilded willow rods, which were gaily adorned with bows of ribbon.

She was in her line, and almost immediately the others were sent in alongside.

"I am fishing for you, Miss Weir," said Dick, boldly. "I want a good partner, and you look as though you danced divinely."

"I am very fond of it," Sybil said, modestly; "but I don't know much about dancing. I think I should be almost afraid to try."

Evelyn frowned and bit her lips. What a fool the girl was.

"Why, Sybil," she said, pettishly, "you are fishing on my side. I want that little fat fish. I'm sure he's got something nice in him."

"You are welcome to him, I'm sure," said Sybil, abandoning her game very pleasantly. "I'd rather have that slim little fellow. Perhaps he hasn't anything in him, and then I shall be allowed to look on."

"Ah!" cried Dick, whose skilled hand had hooked up the first fish. "What have we got here! No. 17. Amy, what is No. 17—gentleman's prize!"

"You dance with Miss Irwin," said Mrs. Bayard, putting a box into her brother's hand. Dick groaned.

"Never mind," said Arbuthnot, laughing. "We are only going to have six figures. Let us see what you have got."

Dick produced a very pretty leather pocket-book, which they were all admiring, when Miss Evelyn's cry of triumph riveted attention on herself.

"I've got him!" she exclaimed, lifting the little fat fish out of the water.

But great was her chagrin when she found that it contained no prize at all, and the name of somebody she did not like.

"I'm afraid I shall not catch any," said Sybil, who found it quite difficult.

"You don't go at it right," said Dick. "Drop your hook down deep, and then bring it up slowly—this way. Try that little fellow over there. That's right. Gently now. There—aha. What did I tell you! That was well done—wasn't it, Ainsley?"

"Excellent!" said Ainsley. "Open him—do! I am consumed with curiosity."

Sybil obeyed, laughingly, expecting nothing.

"By Jove!" Dick cried, "she's hooked the gold ring."

Sure enough, inside of the slim little fish lay the shining band which everyone coveted.

"It is like the Arabian Nights," she said, in astonishment. "How pretty it is! And see, a French motto inside!"

"It means you will be married in a year," said Arbuthnot, smiling into her shy, little, flushed face.

"I don't think that's likely," Sybil replied. "But I never dreamed of getting the ring. I wonder how I ever happened to!"

"There is no great mystery, that I can see," said Evelyn, with a discreditable laugh. "A brother of Mrs. Bayard's ought to be able to prompt one effectively."

"Miss Ogden," said Dick, quickly, "I hope you do not think that I knew where the ring was!"

"Oh, of course not!" was the sarcastic rejoinder. "Ah, Captain Clyde, is that you? The music is playing. I suppose we may as well go into the ball-room."

Dick Clyde smothered an exclamation, as he turned to Ainsley with a curious look.

"You have not fished yet," he said.

"There is plenty of time," Arbuthnot answered. "There is Miss Irwin, Dick. She looks appealing."

"You always have your own way, Ainsley," Dick said, resentfully, and went off to find his partner.

Sybil and Mr. Arbuthnot were left alone by the table.

"Aren't you going to fish?" she asked.

"No; I am to lead the quadrille, and it is my peculiar privilege to choose a partner. Will you dance with me, Miss Weir?"

"Oh, Mr. Arbuthnot, I shall disgrace you."

"I will run the risk," he said, offering his arm, which she took shyly. "How pretty that ring looks on your hand! Do you know I have a strong desire to put it on with a wish."

"Well, I haven't any objection," replied Sybil, blushing faintly.

So Ainsley took her small white hand, and put the ring on it.

"It will come true in a year if it comes true at all," he said. "Now, come! The ball begins at ten, and I must tell you what figures I have chosen."

Everybody wanted to know who that quiet little thing was who danced with Ainsley Arbuthnot; and the next day Dick Travers brought a friend to call. He found Evelyn Ogden alone in her glory.

"Miss Weir has gone out to look after a berth," she said, viciously. "She wants to be a governess, I believe."

"Ah, you don't say so!" said Dick's companion, who was the youth with the primrose. "Do you think she would take me for a pupil? I am not much on most things, but the fellows say I am the very deuce at geography."

A month slipped by, and Sybil went home disappointed. It was the wrong time of the year, they said. She might get a place in the autumn, but there was none vacant now.

"I'm afraid I'm not of much account, Aunt Hannah," she said, despondently, as she sat by the little old study lamp, thinking it all over.

"I might as well have stayed at home, and not spent the money going to town. Indeed," she added, with a sigh, "it would have been a great deal better."

It was an odd answer to her observation that there came just at that moment a ring at the bell, which brought her face to face in the doorway with Ainsley Arbuthnot.

"I have followed you," he said, holding the hand which she gave him. "I found that I could not be happy away from you, and I came to ask, Sybil, whether I might not stay with you always!"

"Come in," she said, leading him into the parlour, where only the firelight shone. "Excuse me," she added, hastily, "I will get a lamp."

"This will do," he said, detaining her. "I like this best. Sybil, you know what I came for. I love you; will you marry me?"

She was a natural girl, without any art or coquetry, and she answered him out of her heart.

"Yes."

"Then my wish will come true," he said, lifting her hand, and kissing it where the gold ring spanned her pretty finger. "Do you know what I wished, darling? The ring said that the year would bring you a husband, and I wished it might be me."

It is needless to say that Sybil did not look for any further position.

"She ought to be satisfied," said Evelyn Ogden, when she heard of the engagement. "It is astonishing what good fortune some of those plain girls have. Mr. Arbuthnot is the best catch of the season."

THE GARDENER'S DAUGHTER.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

"THIS is really too provoking!" exclaimed Mrs. Seymour, looking up from a letter at breakfast the next morning. "Here is a note from Carrie Conway-Green, and she says they have the measles, and she is sending Tommy here to-day, as she is sure I don't mind, and she wants to get the dear child out of the way of infection."

"Tommy! Is that the little beast with red hair, and that wears a kilt?" inquired her cousin Max.

"Hush, Max! You must not call him a beast! He is your heir!" she replied with a smile.

"I know he is my heir, but that does not prevent his being a most mischievous, obnoxious urchin! I hope you are not going to let him loose downstairs. Is there not some nursery or place where he could be stowed away; and can't you get him a kind of keeper?"

"You seem positively afraid of him, Captain Elliot," said the girl.

"Afraid! I should think so! You will be, too, when you know him. Nothing is sacred from him. I don't mind a fine manly boy, with a spice of mischief."

"Such as you were yourself!" interrupted Mrs. Seymour.

"But this little beggar delights in listening to his elders' conversations, storing them up, and bringing out the most dangerous disclosures before everyone, and naturally causing the most embarrassing situations. I've seen people look as if a bomb had exploded on the table after one of his 'stories.' I've known him make people enemies for life."

"He must be a sweet child!" remarked the girl who sat behind him.

"Yes, he does not do it ignorantly, but enjoys it most thoroughly, and sits grinning like a little fiend. He is disgustingly greedy and a hopeless liar, and, in short, as great a little cur as ever was born," rising from his seat as he concluded.

"Hello, Elliot! You seem to have a strong feeling about this boy! The sooner you marry and do him out of his inheritance the better!"

"Oh! he won't come to Carrigort in my lifetime, and when I am dead, I won't care. *Après moi le déluge.* What I object to is his presence here. Ladies, I advise you not to sit next him. He wipes his hands on principle on pretty frocks, and has a grand knack of upsetting tea or claret."

"It's not often Max says so much about anyone," remarked his cousin, after he had left the room. "I suppose it's in human nature to hate one's next-of-kin; and, besides, Tommy is a horrible little boy, quite spoilt. His father and mother encourage him to say rude, sharp things, and they think him quite clever and witty, whilst he is really a little savage."

"Can you not get rid of him any way and shelve him upstairs?" suggested one of the company.

"No. He must have the run of the house and be treated like a grown-up person, or his mother would be mortally offended, and I'm as much afraid of her as Max is."

"I should risk it," said Helen. "Send a telegram—No room for Tommy."

At luncheon the redoubtable Tommy was present—a pale, pretty-faced boy, with red hair, a snub nose, and minus two front teeth. He was dressed in a grey tweed kilt, and was with difficulty prevailed upon to remove his hat, a battered straw sailor one, with a red ribbon.

To some of the company—mutual connections of Mrs. Seymour's—he was but too well known; others gazed at him curiously. So far as luncheon was concerned he belied his character, and confined himself to the business of eating and drinking.

But at dinner he came out in his true colours. He sat opposite Mary, and when he had eaten to repletion he stared at her hard, stared at her intently for about ten minutes. At last he spoke in his high squeaky voice.

"You are Miss Darvall, isn't you? You girl in white!" nodding at her.

"Yes," nodding in reply.
 "You don't look a bit different to others!"
 "Do I not? Why should I?" she inquired.
 "'Cause," glancing at her, "you are only a common girl. 'Cause you were a servant!" and he laughed boisterously.

Mary coloured and, turning to her neighbour, said,—

"He is beginning! I suppose that is bomb number one? What you say is quite true," she returned, looking at Tommy; "but people in the kitchen have some manners, and you have none—you rude little boy."

There was a flash in her eyes that cowed Master Tommy for some time, and he gave his attention to his plate. But during dessert, and during a dead silence, his chattering treble was heard in reply to a young man, his neighbour, who was drawing him out, and who had been cruel enough to give him a glass of wine.

"Mother says that Sophy asked Miss Darvall here because she wants to marry her to Max, and another said—"

"For goodness' sake hold your tongue, Tommy!" cried Mrs. Seymour in despair. "You shall not dine at table again, and if you say another word I shall send you to bed—now!"

Tommy made no reply beyond a hideous face, and presently avenged himself by upsetting and breaking a finger-glass.

His last remark had, of course, been distinctly audible. Some people had listened, some people had looked pale, for they knew not whose turn it might be next; and one or two got red—notably and naturally Miss Darvall. Strange to say, Captain Elliot was about the most unconcerned of the party.

After dinner Mary and Captain Durand, who, she discovered by the way, was a great friend of Max Elliot's, strolled again up and down the terraces in the moonlight, and he said rather abruptly,—

"I did not know, Miss Darvall, that you and Elliot had met before!"

"Why! What do you mean?" she asked, with well-affecting ignorance.

"Only that last night that fellow Stafford was talking in the smoking-room about ladies. He is a free-and-easy sort of man, and not altogether a good lot. He spoke of you—in very high terms, certainly—but that he should mention your name at all seemed to rile Elliot tremendously. He shut him up sharp, in a way that astonished him; and the queer part of it was that you were the only lady for whom he took up the cudgels. He smote Stafford what you might call hip-and-thigh for daring to bring your name into any such conversation, and was quite serious, not to say very much put out. The argument I go on, therefore, is this, that he has met you before; nay, more, that you are old friends! Otherwise, why should he fight your battles, and be so excessively touchy about you?"

"We have met before, I confess, but please keep the secret," she confessed, raising her eyes and looking at him steadily.

"Is it—pardon me—I have a reason for asking—is it a lover's quarrel?"

"No, indeed, it is not," she answered, rather faintly.

"And you are not engaged to him?"

"No."

"Then, Miss Darvall, may I speak? I've known you for some months now. I'm sure you have long guessed my secret. Hitherto I have carefully dared to put my feelings into words; you are so much beyond me in every way. I've not much money, being only a younger son, but I like you, and I am sure that I could make you happy. I have been silent until now for fear you might think I was actuated by mercenary motives, that I was a fortune-hunter. But, indeed, I would have spoken long ago, if you had not had a penny. The last day or two you have been more—more—gracious to me—and I have at last found courage to speak."

Captain Durand poured out the above declaration so hurriedly, and so passionately, that Mary's attempts (and she made several) to cut short the flow of this fervid eloquence were quite useless. When he did come to a full stop she put up her

hands, with a gesture that was enough to show him that he had spoken in vain,—

"Oh! Captain Durand, I never guessed this! I thought—yes, that you liked me to talk to and flirt with, but I never dreamt of this. It is out of the question!"

"Why! Because you don't care about me!"

"Well, yes, that is one reason; but, besides—"

"Because I am a beggarly younger son, and have had the insolence to raise my eyes to a girl with thousands a-year; because—"

"No; not that!" she interrupted. "And, oh! do not be angry with me. I like you very much as a friend—very much, indeed! I'm not thinking of marrying! How dare I? You know my history!"

"And what obstacle is on your mind? What are you thinking of?" he asked, sternly. His looks demanded an answer.

"I'm thinking that I must tell you my secret. I'm thinking of—of what my husband would say to this. I am a married woman!"

They were standing alone at the far end of one of the terraces, and their two figures stood out in strong relief in the white, all-searching light of a full harvest moon.

Other couples, who were wandering about and enjoying the balmy evening, had no time or inclination to give them a glance or a thought, save and except Captain Elliot and his partner, who sat under a not distant lime-tree.

This long *tête-à-tête*, the eloquent, nay, impassive gestures of the man—an attitude of repudiation on the part of the woman—had not been lost on them.

"Do you see Mary and Captain Durand?" said Mrs. Clare. "I am not a person who bets or lays wagers, but if I were I would say that he has just asked her to marry him!" and she glanced at her companion with a smile.

"And she has said no!" he returned, with great promptitude.

"Yes; and given him some reason that has horrified him!" rejoined Mrs. Clare with some excitement. "Did you ever see such a start?"

"Never, poor fellow!"

"I believe I know the reason," said Mrs. Clare, thoughtfully.

"You do!" exclaimed her companion, suddenly turning and looking at her fixedly. "You know the reason? Did she tell you?"

"Oh, dear no; the very last thing she would do! She is naturally a most secretive young lady!"

"Then how?"

"I found it out for myself!" she answered, with conscious superiority.

He paused, and after looking at the moon for nearly two minutes in dead silence, said very slowly,—

"And what do you think of it?"

"I think it shocking, horrible, disgraceful! I never—never was more upset in my life! I could not have believed it if I had not seen it!"

"Seen it! I wonder—I wonder very much, Mrs. Clare, if we are on the wrong tack! Has your discovery got anything to say to me?"

Mrs. Clare thought for a second, and then replied,—

"No more than it has to the man in the moon!"

"Oh!" really visibly astonished. "Then I wonder what it can be!" gasping at her rather listlessly.

"I dare say you do; but I am not going to betray her! She has given her reason to Captain Durand, no doubt; that is sufficient for him! I see that you also possess some weighty secret of Miss Darvall's as well as I do!" glancing at him, sharply.

"Well, yes; it is our mutual property. I don't mind making an exchange with you, Mrs. Clare. You tell me your secret, I'll tell you mine—for it is mine too!"

"No!—no! Not now!" looking at him in a languishing manner as she spoke. "Perhaps some day! I find it hard to refuse you, I do indeed!"

"Then, why run counter to your own wish?"

"Only for a little while," laying her hand in his. "You shall hear all in good time, for you

know very well that I cannot say no to you, no matter what you ask!"

This was a strong hint; but when an elderly adventuresome tries to win a man ten years her junior she must not stick at trifles, and this delicious moonlight night—the perfume of roses and mignonette, the stately Park, and the lovely surrounding scene—all made a most appropriate background for a love tale.

If he would only speak, now was the time and hour, and he would not meet with rude rebuff or startling statement like that unlucky young Durand, who was now hurrying headlong down the terrace steps alone, looking both wild and pale in the moonbeams.

"Hullo, Elliot!" he cried out. "Could you come and speak to me for one moment?"

Max accordingly rose, and with an apology to Mrs. Clare, and a promise of his speedy return, followed his friend down into what was called the Rose Garden. As Mrs. Clare watched him away, she said to herself,—

"I wonder what is his secret, and what he knows about Mary! He would be astonished if he knew mine! They must have met before—but how and where! And how well they play their part of mutual strangers! Of course, how that I think of it they come from the same place. He has known her as a pretty girl running to open the gates at Daneford, and seen her at dances in the servants' hall. Still, that could scarcely be called a secret. What can it be? What can it be?" knitting her delicately touched-up brows. "The idea of that odious little boy saying that Sophy Seymour wanted to make up a match between them is too amusing, even if they did not avoid and cut each other dead as they do! I hold a trump in my hand that would soon spoil that little game! I fancy the trick will be mine," pulling her lace mantilla round her shoulders with a smile. "A woman is only the age she looks. I look eight-and-twenty with my back to the light. I wear well. I am a handsome woman still! My glass tells me that! What can be keeping him? What has that young booby got to say to him? I must be going in. All the others have gone. It's too bad to have our *tête-à-tête* disturbed in this way. However," smiling to herself, "another time will do as well. The game is in my hands. I don't care about hearts as long as I've plenty of diamonds and honours!"

With this remark to herself, and a bright smile upon her face, Mrs. Clare strolled very slowly back to the house.

CHAPTER. XXV.

"WELL, what is it, Durand?" said Captain Elliot, as he overtook his friend, "what is the matter, Jack?" as he suddenly turned round and confronted him with a face working with agitation.

"Plenty is the matter," he answered, fiercely. "I've just been proposing for a girl, and she tells me she is your wife!"

"You mean Miss Darvall!"

"Yes, I do; and is what she says true?"

"Perfectly true. We were married four years ago!"

"Four years! And what do you mean by keeping it secret and allowing her to pass off as an unmarried girl and be made love to by men whom she makes a fool of? Explain it," said his friend, choking with passion.

"Did she not explain?" inquired his companion coolly.

"No; she only told me that she was married to you, and then she burst out crying and ran away. I think considering that you and I were such old friends, that we have done two campaigns, and been often under fire together, that that—that—"

"I have treated you badly, Jack; so it seems until you know the whole thing. You shall hear it all now. We were originally married against our will. We parted at the church door. After two years—she being still known as Mary Meadows—I came home. I repented of certain things I had said and done; I wanted to make friends; I offered to make her my wife in the

night of the wail, to raise her to her proper position."

"And she?"

"Scorned my offer, as if it had been an insult. Then I went away for two years more; I came back to find her here—and that Mrs. Maxwell Elliot is known to the world as Miss Darvall, the great heiress!"

"And are you still at daggers drawn?"

"Yes."

"And never mean to make it up?"

"Never is a long word!"

"And have you never thought of all the trouble and misery you may bring on other people? Girls might fall in love with you in the innocence of their hearts. You are an uncommonly good-looking fellow, and men may and do fall victims to Miss Darvall. Look at me!"

"My dear Jack, I see you plainly. You think you are badly hit, but how many times have you been madly in love before? How many times have I been your unfortunate confidante?"

"Yes, that's true; those were all nothing. No one could hold a candle to her. She is lovely, she is divine! She is the prettiest girl in England, she—"

"And she is Mrs. Max Elliot! She never gave you any encouragement, did she? Now, honestly, Jack, between man and man?"

"She was always pleasant, and laughed and talked, and liked to be my partner at tennis."

"Oh, that's nothing! She did not tell you that she could not say no to you, as a lady was good enough to tell me this evening!"

"No! That was coming it strong! No, she never said much. She is no flirt, but you are, Max. Maybe that is the reason she has been so civil to me the last few days—just to pay you out for the way you are going on with Mrs. Clare."

"Mrs. Clare is old enough to be my mother?"

"She does not think so; and if you don't mind you will get yourself into a nice mess!"

"Rubbish!"

"You can't care very much for your wife when you can dangle after a painted old creature like that! She—Miss Darvall—is far too good for you, there!"

"So I fancy. And she entertains no doubt whatever on the subject herself. She hates me, I believe. And yet I should not say so. She liked me once."

"When?"

"Before we were married. We did not marry to please ourselves. I was furious, and I made the stipulation that we should part after the ceremony. And she had her little condition, too."

"And that was?"

"That she should never be known as Mrs. Elliot. That if she was called by that name, or identified with me in any way, she assured us all that she would go off and drown herself in a certain pool we knew in Carnegoy woods. She has had her way—I'll have my way," added Captain Elliot, as he stroked his moustache.

"Well," ejaculated his friend, gazing at him with round-eyed surprise, "this is the rummiest story I've heard in all my born days! You must have been rather tickled when that little beast at dinner said that Mrs. Seymour wanted to make up a match between you and Miss Darvall."

"His friend took no notice of this remark, but said,—

"I see that we shall have to do something, Jack. This contretemps that has happened to you must not occur again. I must speak to her, and gain her consent to give out the fact that we are married. This masquerading as Mary Meadows was bad enough—as Miss Darvall, the rich heiress, with swarms of suitors, it's ten times worse—it's both improper and intolerable."

"Yes," agreed his friend, "it may be play to you and her, but it's death to other people."

"I must take an opportunity of seeing her alone, and you will have to help me."

"Oh, I say! How could I help you?"

"You know there is to be a great picnic to-morrow to those old ruins; some will ride, some drive; by hook or by crook I must have a talk with her either going or coming. You must

throw yourself into the breach, if necessary, Jack."

"I don't see that at all."

"Come now, it's time to go in," laying his hand on his shoulder. "If you can't see it now I am certain you will to-morrow. At this moment you are feeling rather sore with both of us, but I cannot help myself. Without her permission to speak I must be dumb!"

"What's at the bottom of all this row between you?"

"Fride! I was too proud to own her in the first instance, and afterwards she has had her turn."

"I fancy it will all come right yet," said his friend, with a heavy sigh, and then they turned their steps towards the house in silence.

Miss Darvall was by no means a finished horsewoman, but she had a taste for riding, and few people would have believed that she had never been in a side-saddle till a year ago for the first time in her life. In riding to the picnic she scored over Mrs. Clare, who was not an equestrian, and who was compelled to travel in the landau; after having made a bold and unsuccessful effort to enlist Captain Elliot as her charioter in a small pony carriage.

Captain Durand held aloof from his late divinity, and his place was eagerly taken by the Hon. Bob Stafford, who, after leading a very gay, not to say wild, sort of life, and having accumulated vast debts, began to think it was time to marry—that he must look out for an heiress to "pull him through," and here, under the roof with him, seemed to be the very article of which he was in quest—a well-endowed, handsome young woman, with no relations who would be likely to make disagreeable inquiries, or to "tie up" her money strictly on herself.

Seeing that Jack Durand held back he now came forward, and threw himself into the vacant situation with unusual zeal, and laid himself out to be extremely agreeable to Miss Darvall, at whose right hand he rode all the way to Saltwood Castle, the scene of Mrs. Seymour's picnic.

Captain Elliot and one of the Misses Barry rode in the rear of this couple as they wound along pretty country roads, lined with wide grass borders, high woods, and sweet-scented hay-fields.

Captain Elliot did not prove to be nearly as lively a companion as Miss Barry had expected. He was silent and abstracted, and talked when he did talk at random. His whole attention was constantly fixed on the couple in front, and he never permitted them to get out of his sight. When they trotted, or cantered, he did the same.

His companion wished that he was quartered as amusing as Mr. Stafford, who seemed to talk ceaselessly to his fair charge, and gesticulate with one hand as if he were telling something very interesting, or something very funny; for Miss Darvall would laugh—a very pretty silvery laugh; and when she laughed, or when Mr. Stafford bent towards her confidentially, and laid his hand on her horse's neck, Captain Elliot would frown and gnaw his moustache!

Was he going in for the heiress, too? If he was, it was really too tiresome!

The whole party reached their destination without the smallest adventure. They passed under the old gateway, up a kind of causeway, and came to one of the largest and best-preserved Norman castles in England.

The castle was not to be explored till after lunch, and everyone was quite ready for that meal. As nimble men-servants opened hampers, and spread table-cloths, and bottles of champagne, and raised pies, and hams, and tongues, and cold salmon made their appearance, the guests, with agreeable anticipations of pleasures to come, set off to explore the walls, the old chapel, the towers that were on the walls, and the tilt-yard.

Young ladies climbed spiral staircases and stumbled along the tops of ivy-covered walls in their riding-habits, the most venturesome of these being Miss Darvall, who was rather vain of her strong head and capacity for standing on

giddy heights, and delighted in the screams and expostulations of the other ladies!

At lunch there was a discussion on the subject, and some people said it made them giddy to look down, even from a box in a theatre, or a gallery in church.

"I don't mind where I stand or how high!" boasted Mary. "I'm not the least giddy! I would not mind standing on the tip-top of that tower!" looking up at the lofty old keep above them.

"Oh, there's a wall round that!" said a girl who was exceedingly jealous of the pretty heiress. "You must show your courage in a more dangerous place than that. It was all very fine walking along the top of these walls"—pointing as she spoke—"they are not more than twenty feet high, and you could not have come to much harm if you did fall; but," looking up at the castle (they were seated under some trees close to what had once been the castle chapel), "will you stand out on the little embrasure, or sill, in front of one of those long windows you see near the top?"

"Certainly, if you wish it! I shall have a superb view of the country, and see from Canterbury to France across the Channel!"

"Miss Hall is only joking, Miss Darvall," said Captain Elliot. "She knows you are not a steeple-jack. She does not want, I am sure, to see you break your neck! I am certain that I don't!"

"It is perfectly safe!" she answered. "Of course, if I were giddy I should not try!"

"Giddy or not, I hope you will be dissuaded from making such a dangerous experiment!"

"It is not easy to persuade or dissuade Mary to do anything!" put in Mrs. Clare, with a smile, as if she were making a most flattering remark.

"I know that!" returned Captain Elliot, who was sitting beside her, and speaking in a low voice. "No one knows that better than myself!"

"What did he mean?" thought Mrs. Clare, rather uneasily; but the signal for the ladies to depart, and gossip among themselves leaving the men to smoke and gossip too, being given, she had no chance of questioning her companion at present.

After some time everyone proceeded to explore the interior of the castle (and most delicate business it was), ascending the very ancient crumbling stairs that connected each story. In some places a whole step was wanting, and in the large, low rooms portions of the flooring had given way; and it was really only the most courageous and enterprising of the party who ascended to the top story.

Among these were all the young men, Mary, the two Miss Barrys, Miss Hall, and Mrs. Clare. Yes, Mrs. Clare concealed the tortures she was enduring, and was apparently the boldest of the bold.

She liked being helped up dangerous stakes, and piloted across sunken floors, and led through narrow, little, dark passages by the companion upon whom she had fastened from the moment they entered the ancient pile—that is to say, Captain Elliot.

The gaily chattering, laughing company at last arrived in a low, large room, which, said the guide (a woman who lived below, and whose husband farmed the surrounding land), was said to be where the conspirators arranged for the murder of Thomas à Becket, where they rode to, on landing from France, and from whence they started for Canterbury.

"It looks the very place for a plot!" said Mary, glancing around.

"Yes; and the very place for a view! Here you are!" added Miss Hall. "This is the window we were looking at! Would you be afraid to stand out there?" (with considerable emphasis on the word "afraid.")

"Afraid! I never was afraid in my life!" returned Miss Darvall, stoutly. "If anyone will give me a hand, that I may step through! I shall stand on the place you wish, and view the landscape over!" turning to the embrasure, and gathering up her habit as she spoke.

Various dissuasive voices were raised against



"OH! CAPTAIN DURAND, I NEVER GUESSED THIS!" SAID MARY.

this fool hardy experiment, and raised in vain. The spark of contemptuous defiance in Miss Hall's eye had set her opponent's vanity at defiance. Go she would! She was just about to step out, when Captain Elliot and his companion joined the group! His face blanched visibly as he took in the situation.

"You are mad!" he exclaimed, stretching out his arm. "It is suicide, Mary!" in a lower voice. "I forbid you to do it!"

"Forbid me! What nonsense!" shaking off his detaining hand. "There's no danger! It's all a matter of imagination!"

In another second she was standing out three hundred feet above the tilt-yard, without the smallest protection.

"The view is magnificent I can see—ah!" and with a piercing shriek, that turned her hearer's blood to ice, she disappeared.

CHAPTER XXVI.

It needed a brave heart to step out on the same narrow ledge and look down. Captain Elliot had a brave heart, and he was there in a second, standing upon the dizzy height.

"She is caught," he gasped, "by her habit on a hook about six feet down. So far she is safe. Who will lower me after her! Here," to Miss Dare, "your sash will hold!" tearing it from that trembling young lady.

It was a very wide silk Indian sash, about four yards long; and in another second he had slung it under his arms, and yet another, he was out over the castle wall.

He knew there was not a second to be lost. Mary's life hung literally by a thread. All the weight of her body was upheld by a piece of cloth which was hooked into a rusty old iron stanchion. She was caught near the waist, and, luckily for her, was not hanging head downwards—but how long would this state of affairs hold out!

Captain Elliot was a well-known athlete—the

gymnasium instructor in his regiment—and he was the very best man to depend on in the present emergency. One moment, and he was down; one moment more, and he was returning with a dead weight in his arms, for she had fainted.

"Take care!" he shouted. "Mind the sash does not cut on the window ledge. Hold it far out till I am well alongside."

As he spoke he was on a level with his listeners. Then he handed in his burden first, and then climbed in himself. The whole horrible episode had not lasted three minutes from the time of Miss Darvall's shriek till she was back, and laid safely on the rickety old floor, with Mrs. Clare's salts to her nose; but the time to the horrified spectators had seemed to be at least half-an-hour.

Every face was ashen. Heads of perspiration stood on the men's brows. All the women were shaking like aspen leaves, and Miss Hall was in strong hysterics. It is one thing to read of a tragedy—it is another to see it happen before your very eyes. The hearts of those assembled felt precisely like the Psalmist's, when he describes it of "melted wax."

Of course, Elliot (whose pluck and presence of mind had saved the girl, and spared the spectators the ghastly sight of seeing her dashed to pieces on the flags below), was the hero of the occasion; but all the attention was given to her as she lay stretched out, her head in Mrs. Clare's lap, looking like death.

However, after a very short time, she opened her eyes and looked round in a dazed, bewildered fashion, and asked, as she moved her head from side to side,—

"Where am I? What has happened? What," sitting up, suddenly, "are you all looking so solemn about? Oh!" covering her face with her hands and shuddering. "I remember, only something caught me as I fell!"

"Yes, and only Captain Elliot went down after you!" added Miss Barry; but to these two things neither of them added the alternative.

After a while people recovered the use of their tongues. Miss Darvall recovered her hat and her power of walking, and a certain amount of self-possession; but her nerves were all to pieces. As the party descended the stairs she and her preserver were left to bring up the rear, and she clung to his arm as if she were a drowning person. "Oh!" she gasped, as she shook all over, "I've never felt like this before!"

"Because you never were so near death!" "And you saved me, Max! What can I say to you for saving my life!"

"Give it to me to take care of for the future!"

"I don't know. No!—no! Not that!"

"At least, give me some payment, Mary! Let me ride home with you!"

"Oh, yes; that is not worth asking for!"

"And give me a kiss of your own accord now."

"Now?"

"Yes, here; on these old stairs. No one is looking, and even if they were!"

"If they were I would not do it," colouring, and holding up her face, which had quite recovered its proper tinge by the time they reached the Hall, and the advance guard of the party, who were volubly relating Miss Darvall's terrible adventure to those elders who had not made the ascent. Of course, Miss Darvall must drive home; room could be made in the landau!

But in spite of Mrs. Seymour's prayers and entreaties, Miss Darvall elected to ride. She would ride very slowly. She would take her time. She thought that it would do her good, and steady her nerves; and she had her way, and brought up the rear of the cavalcade at a foot's pace, with Captain Elliot, according to promise.

(To be continued)

PRISONERS, when arrested in Morocco, are required to pay the policeman for his trouble in taking them to gaol.



JAMES ADAIR LOOKED VISIBLY UNEASY AS THE LAWYER COMMENCED TO READ THE WILL.

ORDEAL BY FIRE.

—201—

CHAPTER XXI.

"Of course I shall go to the funeral. I loved Sir Reginald almost as a second father," said the Rector of Trefusa, who had called in at River View the day before his old friend's burial; "but Hilda, I really think you had better stay away. I am told that James Adair is taking on himself all authority, that he acts in all things as master of Woodlake Priory, and he would hardly do that unless he had good reason to believe himself the heir."

"I shall not go to the house," said Hilda, quietly. "I would not place myself in the position of Mr. Adair's guest for the world; but I shall be in the church. I couldn't bear to stay away. You need not trouble at all about me, Archie. Mother and I are going to hire a pony carriage, and I shall drive her over. We shall be in the church before the funeral procession arrives, and go straight from there to the hotel. We shall not so much as see Mr. Adair."

"I think Hilda is right," said Lady Mary, slowly. "If we went with you, Archie—as you are going to read the service—it would look as though we wanted to go on to the house and hear the will read."

"Who sent you your invitation, Archie?" demanded his sister.

"It came from the lawyers. Mr. Graham wrote himself. He said he was the sole executor under the will, and he knew he should be consulting his late client's wishes by asking me to take the service. He added that it was desirable I should be present at the reading of the will, and though he did not feel at liberty to mention the contents, I should find I had not been forgotten."

"Then you have a legacy. How kind of the dear old man. And it will be acceptable, won't

it, my boy; this has been an expensive year to you."

"Yes," and the Rector sighed. "I never had more difficulty in making expenses and income meet. If Sir Reginald has left me fifty pounds it will be a godsend; but I shall not build my hopes on it, mother. A legacy may mean a mourning ring, or something for my church."

"I hope I am not spiteful," said Hilda; "but I hate the thought of the dear old Priory belonging to Mr. Adair. It has always been almost a second home to us, and I am sure we shall none of us cross the threshold willingly now."

"Have you heard anything of Miss Lester?" asked Lady Mary, with sudden interest.

"Nothing. I have withdrawn the advertisements, I could not be at the expense of them any longer, and I am afraid, poor girl, Hilda's theory is correct, that she was unhappily married, and her scoundrel of a husband tracking her here, she felt Trefusa was no longer a safe shelter."

"Well," said his mother, thoughtfully, "I shall never believe any harm of her. I suppose Nora will be looking out for another governess!"

"She means to wait awhile. She says a holiday won't hurt the children, and that she could not bear to see a stranger in Miss Lester's place just yet."

The Tuesday was a brilliantly fine September day, and as the Rector drove himself over to Weston, his feelings were little in tune with the splendour of the weather. In Sir Reginald Fairfax he had lost a generous neighbour and loved friend. If the Baronet had lived, he had meant to defray not only the costs of those advertisements in the agony column, but all the expenses of a long search for Miss Lester. Archibald Trefusa was conscious that eighteen insertions of the appeal in six London papers amounted to no small sum. He did not grudge the money, but he was sorry to have spent it without success.

He left his pony carriage at the Priory stables

and walked on the few yards to the church. He was thankful that reading the service excused him from walking in the procession. He expected it to be a long one, for though Sir Reginald had few relatives, he had been known and loved for miles round his country house.

In his white surplice the Rector of Trefusa stood ready to meet his old friend's coffin. As he had expected, James Adair, the dead man's nephew and next-of-kin, walked closely behind the bier, after him came old Mr. Graham, Sir Reginald's life long friend, and at his side a tall distinguished-looking man, who was an entire stranger to Mr. Trefusa. Then came a host of friends and neighbours, noble and simple, from the illustrious Earl of Caradale to the village schoolmistress; such a train of mourners had not been seen in Weston Churchyard for years.

A little later, when the service was over, and Archibald was taking off his surplice, Mr. Graham came into the vestry.

"I wished to make sure you were coming up to the house. We can walk there together, Mr. Trefusa; but first let me introduce you to Mr. Dynevor, a godson of Sir Reginald Fairfax."

The Rector saw the noble-looking man, whose identity had so puzzled him.

"I do not think you can have been a visitor here of late years, Mr. Dynevor, for I cannot recall your face."

"No," said Harold, as he shook hands. "I have not been here since my schooldays. When I used to visit my godfather, a very aged Sir Roger Trefusa was reigning at the Hall. I fancy it was before your father's time."

"Yes; Sir Roger was my great uncle."

"I have spent the last twelve years of my life in India," went on Harold, "so that I feel almost a stranger in my native land."

The three gentlemen reached the house together. The churchyard was only separated by a hedge from the Priory grounds, so five minutes' walk brought them to the hall door, where a butler stood ready to usher them into the library before taking his place at the head of the long row

of servants who stood at the further end of the room.

Jim Adair had his uncle's seat. He looked a little impatiently at Mr. Graham.

"We are only waiting for you," he said, significantly.

Mr. Graham bowed.

He took a chair immediately opposite Adair, and signed to the Rector and Harold Dynevor to seat themselves near him. Then he produced from his pocket a parchment envelope and broke the seal. The lookers-on were surprised to see that he took from it a single sheet of ordinary writing-paper.

"Before I read this document I should like to say a few words about how it was made. Sir Reginald called on me three weeks before his untimely death, and said that he wanted me to draw up a new will at once. When I prepared to take his instructions I found that he desired the document to be completed there and then. He said he had destroyed his former will, and could not rest until another of some sort had been signed. He dictated the provisions to me, and signed the will in the presence of two of my clerks. If there had been more time the document might have gone into more elaborate details, but could not have been more legal. It is possible but for his haste he might have devised personal keep-sakes to his friends; but I know he had the most perfect confidence in his heir, and felt certain that gentlemen would repair any omissions he might have made."

James Adair looked visibly uneasy. He had parted from Sir Reginald in anger the day before this will had been made. Could it be that his expectations would be defeated after all?

Mr. Graham, after a brief pause, began the will, the legacies to Sir Reginald's servants, to his executor, and such old friends as the Trefusis family excited little surprise. Everyone strained their ears to catch the next clause, and amid breathless silence the lawyer's sonorous voice continued, "and all my real estate of Woodlake Priory, my invested funds, furniture, plate, jewels, ready money, in short all my property, real and personal, I devise to my dear godson, Harold Dynevor, late of the Indian Imperial Bank, and now attached to the London branch of the same. And I name this same Harold Dynevor residuary legatee, and I desire (though I make this no condition of his inheriting my property) that he take the name of Fairfax in addition to his own name of Dynevor, and that he retire from business as soon as he conveniently can, so that he may be at liberty to reside, at least for part of the year, at my old home."

When Mr. Graham finished there was a long, long pause. It was broken by James Adair.

"I shall dispute the will," he cried, passionately, "it was made through undue influence and cannot stand."

"Gently, Mr. Dynevor," said the lawyer, as Harold seemed about to utter an indignant protest, "let me deal with this. First of all, Mr. Adair, as my client had not seen his godson for more than twelve years a charge of undue influence could not lie. Secondly, I have in my possession a letter written to me by Sir Reginald a week before his death, in which he gives me the reason of his passing over your claims to be his heir. If you attempt to dispute the will this letter is to be produced in court. I do not think your future career would gain by the cause of the rupture between your uncle and yourself being published."

"He must have been mad," said Jim, sullenly, "fancy leaving me nothing, and willing five thousand pounds to a girl he had not seen half a dozen times," thinking of the bequest of Miss Lester.

"Who was poor, friendless, and in trouble," said the Rector of Trefusis, gravely. "The young lady was governess in my family, and disappeared under sad circumstances a month ago. Sir Reginald called on me the morning after her flight. He took the greatest possible interest in her, and told me he would be at all the expenses of the quest for her. He also told me, what may be known to some present, that his late wife was a governess before her

marriage, and that for her sake he had always tried to help every lonely girl who crossed his path."

Then Lord Carsdale rose.

"I was with Sir Reginald the day before his death, and I suggested sending for Mr. Adair. My old friend told me then that he had made such painful discoveries respecting his nephew that he had no desire to see him again. I asked him then who would have the Priory, and he told me the son of his dearest friend, a young man who, through all the stress and temptations of life, in an Anglo-Indian town, had yet continued to wear 'the white flower of a blameless life.' In the name of the county generally, and of Weston in particular, I have the greatest pleasure in welcoming Mr. Dynevor as the new master of Woodlake Priory."

Harold briefly acknowledged the compliment, and then James Adair broke out again,—

"You seem easily satisfied as to his identity. I believe, myself, you are victims of some clever impostor. The true Harold Dynevor, the one engaged at the Indian Imperial Bank, left Calcutta last February in the *Atlanta*, which unfortunate steamer (as the Rector of Trefusis can endorse) was lost at sea."

Harold Dynevor looked round the assembled company, pale, grave, and stern.

"Yes, Mr. Adair, you and I were fellow-passengers on board that ill-fated ship. You managed to find a place in the boat intended only for women and children. You saved your life at the price of another's, so that I should not in your place care to refer much to the loss of the *Atlanta*."

James Adair was livid with rage. Once, twice, he tried to speak, but the blazes which drowned his voice made him realise at last that an attempt to exonerate himself was vain.

Mr. Dynevor spoke again.

"It had never occurred to me that I should have to prove my identity, but I don't think I shall have much difficulty in doing so. The chief at the London branch of the Imperial Bank will tell you that I wrote to him as soon as the foreign vessel which picked me up from the wreck had landed me at a small Italian town. He has made no difficulty in cashing the cheques I have drawn in the name of 'Harold Dynevor,' and a very old family friend recognised me at once, though I had been twelve years in India. If this is not sufficient, plenty of people in Calcutta would identify me by my photograph."

"I will consult counsel on Mr. Adair's objection," said Mr. Graham; "but frankly, I am perfectly satisfied. It is not as though you had sought us out and made any claim. As a legal form, I will submit the point to counsel, but I think there will be no difficulty."

"I shall not give up possession of Woodlake," said James Adair, "until the question is at rest."

"Then you will place me under the painful necessity of turning you out," said Mr. Graham, "as sole executor, all power rests with me. I am perfectly satisfied as to Mr. Dynevor's identity, and in any case, until you can prove your uncle's heir is dead, you have no claim on the property."

Archibald Trefusis stepped in with the infinite tact which had won him golden opinions from rich and poor.

"I think, Mr. Dynevor, as things are, you will not care to spend the night at the Priory. It is too late to return to London, and I shall esteem it a favour if you will become my guest. My family and Sir Reginald's have been friends for generations."

"I will accept your offer gladly," said Harold Dynevor, "but before we leave Weston can I send a telegram to my wife, as I left it uncertain if I should return to-night?"

"Certainly. There is an office in the village."

"The true Dynevor was an unmarried man," put in Adair, bitterly, "as anyone will tell you."

Dynevor smiled.

"I was not married till some weeks after I left the *Atlanta*," he said, to Mr. Trefusis; and then the assembly broke up, the Rector and the new master of the Priory going to the post-office.

"Mr. Trefusis," said Harold Dynevor, as they

drove out of Weston, "before I become your guest there is one thing I should like to tell you, and if it makes the least difference in your feelings, please say so frankly and let me put up at the inn."

"My dear sir," said the Rector, "I can guess what you are going to say. You are a Romanist, it makes no difference to my wish to have you as a guest. I own I am not entirely disinterested. My brother's wife was lost on the *Atlanta*; as it seems you were rescued from the wreck unknown to the authorities, a wild hope has seized me that Idonie also may survive, and I had looked forward to asking you if such a thing were possible."

"I am no Romanist, Mr. Trefusis, but my wife—my wife's story is linked with that of the ill-fated girl you have just mentioned. I married Anne Lindsay, the sister of Lady Trefusis."

"Heaven bless my soul!" It was not often the Rector indulged in such expletives, but he was strongly moved, "then, of course, that was the reason we never found her."

"You don't mean that you looked for her—for Nan?"

"We did indeed! When the news of Idonie's loss reached us, we heard that Miss Lindsay had escaped in one of the boats and been picked up by another steamer. It seemed to my mother and sister that if they could offer the poor girl a home it would be like doing something for Denzil's wife. My younger brother and my sister Hilda went to London to meet the ship and bring Miss Lindsay away. They could not find her, but a kind, motherly woman another survivor from the *Atlanta*, told them the young lady had left the steamer at Brindisi. It appeared from Mrs. Marsh's account, that Adair had persecuted Miss Lindsay with his attentions, and it was as much to escape his pursuit as to end her suspense about her sister, that the poor girl decided to finish her journey overland."

"Thank Heaven," said Dynevor, fervently. "What news for Nan?"

"I don't understand," said the Rector, much perplexed, "the story of her own doings can't be news to your wife."

"I must tell you the story from the beginning," and Harold related all that passed on the *Atlanta* from the moment that Idonie took advantage of her sister's indisposition to change their identity.

"Until we were left on the doomed ship, I never had a suspicion that Nan was not Lady Trefusis," he concluded. "Of course, I see now that the change of name has caused endless confusion, but it was not my wife's fault. Sir Denzil had impressed on her Idonie's wishes were to be humoured in every way; doctor and nurse had assured her her sister's recovery depended on her being kept bright and cheerful. Idonie was a creature of moods, of smiles and tears, her illness had left her in a depressed state. If Nan had refused to give in to her whim she would have moped throughout the voyage; then, too, she took advantage of her sister, being almost prostrate with a nervous headache, to take the law into her own hands."

"I can see that it was a cruel position for Mrs. Dynevor," said the Rector, feeling it more convenient to give Nan a name she had never lent to another, "and, of course, the thing once done could not be altered."

"No. When James Adair proposed to Idonie she was almost frantic with anger, but, as Nan said, to undo the mistake then would have caused endless scandal."

"But why did not my sister-in-law come to us?" asked poor Mr. Trefusis. "Putting aside the cruel anxiety she has caused her husband, how in the world could she support herself?"

Dynevor shook his head.

"It is clear enough to me, but then you see I knew her. I had heard, too, the current scandal in Dolerabad about Miss Grant."

"My brother was devoted to his wife," interposed the Rector. "Alice Grant was nothing to him but a cousin."

"Let me tell you my view of Idonie's conduct," said Harold. "Arrived at Brindisi she would seek news of her sister and hear of her death, this would leave the poor girl with no one

in England to support her story. If she had applied to you it must have come out that she had travelled as Miss Lindsay, then that brute Adair chanced to be a friend of the Trefusis family and had threatened to go to them and say how he had been treated by Miss Lindsay. Idonie was as timid as a child. How could she face her mother and confess that she had denied her wifehood and received an offer of marriage like a girl!

"When my wife recovered and we could talk over things we decided, whether we should write to Lady Mary Trefusis. Nan was against it. She said that any intercourse between myself and Sir Denzil's family must end in their discovery that Idonie had been the Miss Lindsay of the voyage. In her tenacious regard for her sister's memory this was odious to her. On the other hand, she was most anxious to write to her brother-in-law. Short as was their acquaintance she had conceived for him a strong regard. She wanted, I think, not only to assure him that Idonie had every chance of safety that could be given her when once the *Adalton* was doomed, but also to tell him his wife loved him to the last. I was rather against Nan writing; it seemed to me so long had elapsed that Sir Denzil would have got over the first shock of his loss, and this letter would re-open his grief. But I always leave Nan a free agent, and—she wrote the letter."

Mr. Trefusis started, "Impossible!"

"She wrote the letter," repeated Dynevor, "but no reply ever came. Either news had reached Sir Denzil of the sisters' change of identity on the voyage, or—and I thought this most probable—Adair had fulfilled his threat of blackening Miss Lindsay's name to the Trefusis family, and Sir Denzil had no wish to continue any intercourse with Nan."

The Rector shook his head.

"My brother never had that letter. So far from thinking evil of his wife's sister, he has always written of her in the highest terms; and, from the first, he refused to believe she survived, saying, 'Nan Lindsay would either save his wife or die with her.'"

"Does he still think of returning to England this year?"

"Yes. At first he declared he could not stand England without Idonie; but my mother wrote and represented his property had claims upon him. She said, too, that she was getting old, and longed to see him take possession of his inheritance. Then, the time of his appointment expired this year, and he had made definite arrangements to resign, and it seemed difficult to alter them; so he holds to his old plan, and we expect him in about five weeks."

"And I may tell my wife you and yours will not object to her as a neighbour on account of her relationship to poor Idonie?"

"Tell her we shall be delighted to welcome her as a relation. Mr. Dynevor, after what I have told you, do you still regard Idonie as dead?"

"I don't know what to think. I wish that I could go out to Brindal and make inquiries. It is there the clue lies."

"I suppose Sir Reginald's legacy will entail so much business on you that you could not possibly leave England?"

"It is not that. I cannot well leave my wife, she is not in robust health. The doctors would never sanction her travelling from place to place (and whoever went would have to follow up the clue wherever it led them), and I could not leave her in England without explaining the object of my journey; the agitation and suspense would be most dangerous for her."

"I think I understand," said the Rector. "You are expecting an heir to Woodlake Priory before many months are over?"

Dynevor coloured like a girl.

"That's it," he said, simply. "You see I couldn't leave Nan."

"Of course not. I would offer to go myself, for Sir Reginald's legacy makes me feel a rich man; but then this difficulty comes in, I have never seen Idonie."

"When is your brother Douglas to be married?"

"In a fortnight. He wants the ceremony over before Denzil's return, out of consideration for his brother's feelings, he says; but I fancy Douglas is so much in love, he catches at any excuse to hasten his felicity. Were you thinking the happy pair might make the inquiries on their honeymoon?"

"It crossed my mind, but I understand Miss Lester has never seen Idonie. The intimacy with my wife only began after Nan came to London."

"She has mourned your wife very truly. Her first meeting with Douglas came about through her anxiety for news of her friend."

"Nan wrote to her, but the letter was returned through the dead-letter office. Then we saw the news of your brother's engagement, and felt, as his *fiancée*, Miss Lester would not care to renew the old friendship."

"You wronged her. I am sure she will be delighted to hear of your wife's escape."

Dynevor was silent just a little.

"You see, Mr. Trefusis, it all happened so long ago. It is seven months since the wreck, and six, at least, since Lady Trefusis landed at Brindal. What can have become of her? I feel so anxious that I really think, perhaps, I had better not say a word to Nan until we find out something more."

CHAPTER XXII.

NORA TREFUSIS welcomed the strange guest with the charming hospitality which had made the Rectory such a favourite haunt with all her friends. Then when Mr. Dynevor had been taken up to his room Archibald told his wife first of their wonderful legacy, then of the startling story he had just heard.

"Five hundred pounds! How good of that dear old man. It will make things so much easier. I am sure you have worried dreadfully over money matters lately, and such a nice legacy to Hilda, now mamma won't trouble so about her future."

"You mean mother will leave off trying to persuade her to marry!" said the Rector, smiling; "and don't forget poor little Miss Lester's share. I think I shall put fresh advertisements in now."

Nora was playing with her wedding-ring a habit of hers when perplexed.

"Archibald, don't you think it would be as well if I wrote to Mrs. Gresham?"

"To whom?" not understanding in the least.

"To Mrs. Gresham. You know her husband is a clergyman abroad, and Miss Lester spent two or three weeks with her before she went to Dover. Surely the Greshams would know something of her story."

"I wonder we never thought of it before," said Mr. Trefusis.

"I did, often; but you see till now we could have done nothing for her. From her first letter it was plain she would not stay here, and we were not rich enough to provide for her elsewhere. Now we can tell her that she has a fortune of her own."

The Rector looked keenly at his wife.

"Nora, your voice is full of mystery. I am quite sure you are evolving some wonderful scheme in your head."

"Perhaps I am."

"You never had a secret from me yet," he said, reproachfully. "Won't you trust me now?"

"Will you promise not to laugh?"

"I'll be as solemn as a judge."

"You know Hilda's theory about her poor little friend?"

"That she had a scamp of a husband. I have fancied the same thing myself."

"We won't discuss the husband's character. I think she was married."

"Why?"

"Well, I went in once in a hurry when she was dressing, and I could not help seeing she had a wedding-ring suspended round her neck by a blue ribbon. I felt so ashamed of surprising her secret that I tried to forget all about it."

"And now for the wonderful scheme. Perhaps you think she has forgiven the past, and gone back to her husband?"

Nora shook her head.

"No; but since you told me Mr. Dynevor's story, a strange suspicion came to me. It was so sudden it seemed almost like an inspiration. I believe that Miss Lester is your sister-in-law Idonie Trefusis!"

"Nonsense!"

"Archibald, you promised not to laugh," said poor Nora, almost in tears, and the Rector grew serious in a moment.

"So I did. I'll be quite grave, I promise; but, my darling, it is such a fantastic idea, for the moment I could not help it. Will you tell me what put it into your head?"

"I never thought of it until you told me about Mr. Dynevor. I suppose from his story it is clear Lady Trefusis was rescued from the wreck, and that she landed at Brindal early in March."

"Quite dear."

"Mrs. Graham's husband is a clergyman and they live only a few miles from Brindal. When the answered my inquiries she said that Miss Lester had spent some weeks in her house that spring. That she had returned from abroad to find her only sister dead, and thus having no near relations she was obliged to keep herself. Every word of this would apply to Idonie."

"But Idonie was passing under the name of Lindsay not Lester."

"Yes; but no doubt she told Mrs. Gresham her story—Nan's story, remember—and when she wrote asking her to answer my letter, she might easily say that as I was a relative of her sister's husband, she could only enter my family under an assumed name."

The Rector shook his head.

"Too far fetched, darling!"

"But that's not all. Did you ever see any one as sad as Miss Lester? Don't you remember, too, how she loved to take the children to play in the grounds of Trefusis Hall? I have seen her look at the beautiful old house till the tears came into her eyes. I asked her once if it reminded her of any place she had known and loved. She said 'no, but it made her think of poor Lady Trefusis; it must be so terrible to die and leave such a home.' Then she was never tired of listening to your mother's praises of Denzil, and—there was the children."

"The children!" said the Rector, helplessly.

His wife went on, "She loved them so, and she had such a way with them, I don't think an unmarried girl could have had just that way, and once, when I was telling her about the little one who died, she said I must not sorrow too much, I had the others left, and you, while some poor mothers lost their all."

"Nora," said the Rector, "don't tell Dynevor of your idea, let us say that we have exchanged letters before now with Mrs. Gresham, and that, from her husband's official position, we think she would be just the person Idonie might have sought help of. Then we'll leave it to him to write or tell us."

"And there's another thing," said Nora. "Mr. Adair started to come to us the last afternoon Miss Lester was here. She came back from a little walk as pale as a ghost. Suppose that he met her and threatened to denounce her to us, that would explain all."

Archibald Trefusis stared.

"I believe you're right, Nora, after all, and Sir Reginald got wind of Adair's cowardice. That's why he was so eager Miss Lester should be found, why he provided for her in his will, why he disinherited Adair."

They dined later than usual that night in honour of the guest. The gentlemen soon followed Nora to the drawing-room, and then the Rector said to his wife,—

"I changed my mind and have told Mr. Dynevor everything. Nora, and he thinks with you that our poor little governess was really Idonie Trefusis."

"I am sure of it," said Harold. "It was just the sort of thing she would be likely to do. She would consider it a kind of penance for her past wilfulness to live in sight of her own house as a

stranger, and she would hear from time to time of her husband."

"You think she loved him then?"

"She loved him dearly; but they misunderstood each other. She thought he repented the marriage, that he would rather the children had lived and she died. He was afraid he was too old for her. He would not or could not see that she only plunged into gaiety from a longing to forget her grief. Then Miss Grant appeared on the scene and the breach grew wider. He was taught to believe that she had never cared for him, but had been tempted by his money."

"I am sure I should have hated her," broke from Nora. "Archibald, if ever your cousin comes to England we won't let her spend even a day with us."

"I am sure I don't want her, my dear," said the Rector, promptly; "but you and I should be safe enough. It's only when there is a tiny rift within the lute already that women like Alice Grant have power to do harm."

"I can tell you one thing," said Dynevor, gaily, "she'll never get a husband in Dolersbad. My friend, Lady Carillon, says that no man will look at her, and no woman has a good word for her."

"And now," asked Archibald Trefusis, "which shall it be, Dynevor, will you write to Mrs. Graham or shall my wife?"

"I would prefer Mrs. Trefusis to do so. I would suggest that she should ignore the episode of *Miss Lester* altogether, and merely say that she is seeking news of Anne Lindsay, a survivor of the wreck of the *Atalanta*, who is believed to have landed at Brindisi in March. If you can give the exact date so much the better. Then I would add that the young lady's sister, having been saved from the burning ship almost as by a miracle, you are anxious to reunite them; that Mrs. Marsh, a fellow-passenger of *Miss Lindsay*, suggested your applying to Mrs. Gresham."

"But she did not," objected Nora.

"She would if you could consult her. I remember perfectly, on the voyage, how much she talked of the Greshams. They had done a good work somewhere in the East of London, and she regarded them almost as saints."

"I will write by to-morrow's post," said Nora.

"And now, Mr. Dynevor, how much shall you tell your wife?"

"I shall not tell her of the chance her sister is alive; but I shall say that Sir Denzil is expected home in five weeks, and that his family have not the least objection to making her acquaintance."

"I should think not," said Nora; "but how about Mr. Adair, will he give you any trouble?"

"As soon as the long vacation is over I shall settle his game," said Dynevor, "but very likely he will cave in. Mr. Graham has told him he has not a leg to stand on, other lawyers will say the same. Probably Nan and I will be at the Priory before Sir Denzil returns."

"But your business—"

"As a fact I have never formally taken over the duties of my new post. I was to have begun work at Michaelmas, but I fancy the chief can easily find some one to replace me, and that I shall never have the honour of serving in the London branch at all."

"And have you furnished a house?"

"We have been house-hunting, but were hard to please. Oddly enough the abode we most desired was also coveted by Mr. Douglas Trefusis, and he had the luck to obtain the refusal of it."

"You mean the Rookery then?" Douglas has taken it on a seven years' lease."

"We thought he would. Nan told me it was too big for us."

"Well, you can afford to forgive Douglas now," said Nora, "the Priory is the most charming house in the county."

"Must you really return by that early train to-morrow?" asked Mr. Trefusis. "I should so have liked to take you over to River View to see my mother and sister."

"I am afraid I must defer that pleasure. You see Nan is alone, and we have never been parted before since our marriage."

"And where did that take place?" asked Nora.

"At Naples. Nan was ill for weeks after our

rescue. I feared she had only been saved from the sea to fall a prey to brain fever. We stayed at a little Italian Inn, the hostess was an Englishwoman. She insisted on speaking of Nan to everyone as my wife because she said Italians would be so horrified at the idea of our travelling together otherwise. I could not get her to understand that our leaving the ship alone was compulsory."

"I wonder you ever got your wife on board another steamer."

"Our voyages have been very brief since. We went overland through Italy and France, and spent a long honeymoon in Brittany."

"And now I hope you have a long and happy life to spend together," said the Rector, kindly.

"Thank you. I fear if Idonie's fate remains a mystery, a shadow will always rest upon my wife. I am not generally desponding, Mr. Trefusis, but though I am convinced your governess, Mr. Idonie, I can't help fearing the worst. You see she has been lost three weeks. She had no friends, and the knowledge that a man like Adair was her relentless enemy might well make her reckless."

After he had driven his guest to the station the Rector and his wife went over to River View to tell Lady Mary and her daughter of the good fortune that had befallen them by Sir Reginald's will.

"Well, Archie," said Hilda, "I do think you might have sent over word last night, you might know we should be as glad that James Adair was disinherited as of our legacy."

"My dear girl, I brought Dynevor back with me and he told me so many extraordinary things it quite went out of my head that I ought to have sent you a note; besides, I felt Graham would do it."

"Yes, we got his letter this morning, so you only deferred our good news twelve hours. Under the circumstances, I'll forgive you."

And when she heard what Mr. Dynevor had told her brother she admitted it was only natural it had put any other subject out of his head.

"We can do nothing till Nora hears from Mrs. Gresham. Only, Archie, even if *Miss Lester* is not Idonie she is certainly your ward, so I think you might go on advertising for her."

The Rector did so; but no answer had come to his appeal in the agony column, when, by the earliest post possible after her letter, Nora received a reply from Mrs. Gresham.

"MY DEAR MRS. TREFUSIS,—

"It is very strange that you should apply to me for news of *Miss Lindsay*, seeing she is at present beneath your own roof."

"When she was leaving us to return to England, she had such a dread of being interviewed by curious people or regarded as a nine days wonder as one of the survivors of a wreck, that she changed part of her name and called herself *Lindsay* instead of *Lester*."

"Later on, when fate led her to a situation with relatives by marriage of her poor sister, I felt that her doing this was quite providential."

"I am writing to her by this same post to congratulate her most truly on the happiness in store for her. I, who saw how bitterly she grieved for her sister, can understand a little of the gladness she will feel at their reunion."

"Yours most truly,

"FANNY GRESHAM."

(To be continued.)

The drug used by the Chinese in catching fish is *Coculus indicus*, which is powdered and mixed with dough and scattered broadcast over the water after the manner of sowing seed. The fish seize and devour it with avidity and instantly become intoxicated and turn up by hundreds on the top of the water. They are then gathered up and placed in vessels containing clear water.

"THE HUMAN HAIR: Its Restoration and Preservation." A Practical Treatise on Baldness, Greyness, Superfluous Hair, &c. 40 pages. Post-free six stamps from Dr. HORN, Hair Specialist, Bournemouth.

IF I BUT KNEW.

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CHAPTER XXXIV.—(continued.)

"I suppose you are wondering why I invited her here," he said, slowly, "and I may as well tell you the truth, that you will not for a moment imagine I sent for her to indulge in a flirtation. *Miss Morland* wrote me that she was coming to pay my wife a fortnight's visit, so what could I do? Without waiting to receive a reply from me—here she is. You will come with me, and welcome her!"

"Certainly," said Dalrymple, understanding Owen's position.

Miss Morland looked exceedingly annoyed as the two men approached.

She had calculated upon meeting Owen alone. He meant to tell him in a few words that her life was ruined because of his marriage. Now she could only exchange the merest formal greeting. Biting her red lips fiercely and forcing a smile to them, she held out her hand.

"I am so delighted to see you again, Mr. Courtney!" she declared, giving Dalrymple only a stiff haughty bow.

Owen assisted her from the carriage and avoided looking at her as much as possible—a fact which annoyed her exceedingly.

"And I am so anxious to see your bride," she continued.

Owen could readily understand that, and so could Dalrymple.

Dalrymple followed his friend to the drawing-room. He stood by the young bride's side when *Honor Morland* was presented to her.

He had expected to see an expression of bitter dislike on the doll-like pink-and-white face. He was surprised and relieved to see *Honor* hold out her little hand and murmur in her cooling voice—

"I am so delighted to see you, Mrs. Courtney! I am sure we shall be friends."

Rhoda gazed anxiously, wistfully, into the pink-and-white face. *Honor's* sea-blue eyes met her gaze unflinchingly; her red lips, which suggested more of art than nature, wore a mask of the sweetest smiles.

The young bride drew a deep breath of relief. She had been unnecessarily frightened she told herself. Now that *Honor* knew Owen was married, she had in all probability resigned herself to the inevitable.

"Probably she has another lover by this time, and thinks no more of Owen," thought Rhoda.

Something like the same thought came to *George Dalrymple*. How little they knew what was in the heart of the girl who was laughing and chatting so gaily.

"She has married the man I love," said *Honor Morland* to herself; "but I will part them. I will study her closely, find out her weak points, and then I will carry out the plan I have laid out. I vowed that I would take a terrible revenge on any woman *Owen Courtney* might marry, and I will keep my vow!"

Honor Morland was diplomatic. If she had been as successful in winning the hearts of men as of women, she would have little difficulty.

Honor Morland began making herself agreeable to the young wife; set about winning her confidence and charming her, as a serpent charms a dove that it would destroy. She deceived even the *Montague* girls and their worldly wise mother who had been watching her with shrewd eyes. Later on, in the privacy of their own room, the two girls were discussing the situation.

"*Honor* seems to have got over her infatuation for young Mr. Courtney in an amazingly quick time," said *Sophie*, reflectively.

"Don't you suppose she cares a little for him yet?" asked *Edith*, the younger, who was very romantic.

"Certainly not," chimed in her mother, with asperity. "She has too much good sense for that. No young girl would waste a thought on a man who has married another. She would be more likely to set about getting someone for herself with as little delay as possible. No doubt she will make a conquest of *Captain Edmonds*, or his

friend, Mr. Dalrymple—unless," she added, quietly, "you two girls prevent it. Those gentlemen, you must remember, are both wealthy and eligible."

"She will not stand much of a chance with Captain Edmunds," said Edith, triumphantly; and she turned to her sister Sophie, who had nothing to say.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ALONE in her room, Honor Morland stood before her mirror and critically viewed the face reflected in it.

"I am more beautiful than Owen Courtney's wife," she cried, nodding approvingly to the dimpled, smiling face, "and I will make that beauty tell. He does not look happy," she mused. "I, who know him so well, can see it. He has married her, but he is dissatisfied. There is something amiss between them. Ere I have been in this house a week, I will discover what it is." She nodded to the reflection in the mirror. "I had hoped that, seeing him married, I could steal my heart against him, but I find I cannot."

As yet she had not had an opportunity of being alone with Owen's wife; but the opportunity she sought was afforded her the next morning.

Honor was not an early riser—indeed, she had never seen the sun rise, nor the grass wet with dew—but hearing the sound of voices, and recognising the sweet clear tones of Owen's wife, she crept to the window and looked out.

The sight that she beheld filled her with the direst rage. She saw the young bride, who wore a white dress, enhanced by touches of crimson here and there. In her little white hands she carried a great bunch of crimson roses, which were no redder than her cheeks and lips.

"She is more lovely than I even thought," muttered the blonde, in a rage. "Now is my opportunity," she mused. "I will have an early morning chat with her."

A few minutes later Rhoda was surprised to see her guest crossing the lawn and coming to where she stood.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Courtney," she cried, in her sweet, cooling voice. "How delighted I am to see that you are an early riser like myself."

"Yes," said Rhoda, quietly, "I have been accustomed all my life to getting up early. I could not remain in bed on a sunshiny morning."

"Then you agree with the writer who said that the greatest objection he had to fashionable people was that they spend the best part of their lives in bed. What beautiful roses you have!"

"Yes," returned Rhoda, enthusiastically, "the roses about here are the finest I have ever seen."

"How do you like your new home?" asked Honor.

"Oh, I am pleased with it beyond expression," she returned, enthusiastically.

"Tell me all about your courtship," cried Honor, throwing her arms carelessly about Rhoda. "It must have been such a romantic one."

The question was asked so suddenly no wonder poor Rhoda was stunned by it. Her face turned as pale as death; the roses fell from her nerveless fingers.

"Did I startle you?" exclaimed Honor, looking sharply into her white face.

"No, but the question was asked so abruptly," stammered the young wife.

"You will tell me about it, won't you?" said Honor.

"There is nothing to tell," said Rhoda, in a voice strangely husky and with a ring of pain in it.

"Nonsense," cried Honor, archly, "there is a fund of romance in every courtship. Tell me how and where you met, if you were attracted to each other at first sight, and how long you knew Owen before I asked the momentous question! Any girl would be sure to ask you that. So please don't think it presumptuous of me."

"Oh, no!" returned Rhoda, regaining some-

thing of her composure, though by a great effort. "I—I really do not know how it came about—it seems like a dream to me. I do not think he intended asking me to become his wife when we first met. It was fate that brought it about in its own strange, unaccountable way."

"But did you not love him at first sight?"

"No—yes," answered the young wife, distressedly, feeling that she must answer the questions put to her. "But I think I have learned to love him more since we have been married."

Honor laughed in her light, airy way. "All wives tell the same story," she declared.

"But you have not told me how and where you first met."

That question was more than the hapless young bride could endure. Again a terrible pallor spread over her face. How could she answer—what should she say to this question?

Like a stag brought to bay, the hapless young bride, whose marriage held no romance, but, instead, a tragedy, threw up her hands and fell in a deep swoon at Honor's feet.

"Ah!" thought Honor, exultantly, "I have found the first link in the secret chain."

She quickly summoned one of the servants.

"Your mistress has fainted," she said. "Tell Mr. Courtney to come here quickly."

But instead of obeying her and calling his master, he hurried to the prostrate figure himself. Lifting her in his brawny arms, he carried her into the house and up to the housekeeper's room.

At luncheon, young Mrs. Courtney was in her seat at the head of the table, chatting as pleasantly as ever when Honor entered.

"Please do not mention my indisposition of this morning," whispered Rhoda, as Honor passed her.

But Honor, who had other intentions, pretended not to hear this faintly uttered appeal.

It was not until evening that she found Owen Courtney alone.

She had seen him enter the library, and she followed him there a few moments later.

"Oh I beg your pardon!" she said, pretending to draw back on the threshold. "I do not wish to intrude, Owen."

"It is no intrusion," he declared, rising and gravely placing a seat for her. "If I can be of service to you in finding a book, please command me." As much as to say that she must have come there to secure a book.

She noticed the insinuation, but she said to herself—

"I will have him search for a book that I am sure the library does not contain, and I will improve the time while he is searching by chatting with him."

Then Honor said aloud—

"I am sorry to put you to that trouble, but if you could only find a certain book for me, I would be much obliged. Once, when your uncle was here, I came across a book entitled 'A Strange Romance,' and I became interested in the first few chapters. I should like to take it to my room and finish it."

"I will look for it with pleasure," he said, turning to the book-case at once.

"You must not think me romantic in selecting a book with that name," laughed Honor, archly.

"Certainly not," he declared. "It is the nature of girls to like anything romantic. It would be a strange girl who is not inclined that way."

"Oh, by the way," added Honor, with a light, silvery laugh, "I hope your bride is feeling no ill effects from her slight indisposition of this morning."

He looked at her wonderingly.

"I did not know," he said, after a moment's pause, speaking quite absently, "that she was ill."

"You did not know that she fainted on the lawn this morning?" asked Honor, in wonder.

"No," he returned, absently. "I was not informed of it. It could not have been anything serious, or they would have sent for me."

"How remarkable that he did not know of it!" she thought.

The next moment he had quite forgotten the incident.

"I am afraid I cannot find the book," he said with a troubled face. "I have run over all the titles. The book you wish does not seem to be among them. Possibly someone has it."

"Let me help you to search for it," she said, rising from her chair. "Perhaps you have overlooked it."

They looked carefully over the book-cases, while she chatted in her gay, careless fashion.

"If I do not find the book I want, here is one I will take," said Honor, laughingly, and holding up a volume.

He glanced at the book as she held it in her white little hand, and saw that the title was, "Mismated."

"I was thinking about that book the other day, and wondered if we had a copy of it."

Honor looked at him keenly. Why did he wish to read such a book? A man happily wedded would laugh at a book with that title.

An idea suddenly occurred to her. She would put the same question to him that she had put to his bride, and see what answer he would make her.

"Owen," she said, calling him by the name she had always used when addressing him, "you have never told me how or where you met your wife. Someone hinted that your marriage was a very romantic affair."

She saw him grow white to the lips. A look of that quickly turned into one of deepest pain, crossed his face.

"Every man thinks his courtship the most romantic in the world," he said, with a laugh that was certainly forced. "I really do not remember all the details."

"You do not remember how and where you first met your bride? Why, I should fancy that is something which would be indelibly impressed upon your mind."

He laughed and there was a strange tinge of bitterness in the laugh.

"I don't think we have the book you desire," he said, trying to turn the subject.

"You sly fellow!" said Honor; "you want to change the topic. But I think it would be cruel of you to refuse to answer my question."

It would take as long to tell the story that I am sure you would grow weary of listening to it. One person's love story has no interest for another."

"But yours would interest me," said Honor, softly.

Just then Mrs. Montague entered the library, and Owen was very grateful for the timely interruption.

"Ah! I thought I should find you here," exclaimed that lady, airily.

The smile with which Owen welcomed her puzzled Mrs. Montague.

"I hope I'm not intruding," she said, observing the shade of annoyance which the pretty little blonde was doing her best to conceal.

"No indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Courtney, heartily.

"Your presence is always welcome, I assure you you. Do come in. I was searching for a book that Miss Morland wishes to read, but I cannot find it. Perhaps you might be able to find it, as you are better acquainted with my uncle's library than I am."

"I have lost my opportunity this time," thought Honor; "but 'all things come to those who wait.'"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"THERE is something connected with the manner in which Owen Courtney first met his wife that I must find out," was Honor's mental comment.

It was not long before she discovered that her beautiful young hostess knew almost nothing of music.

"I think I have discovered her secret," she said to herself. "She must have been a poor girl, perhaps a working-girl."

Instead of seeing the wisdom of Heaven in such an alliance, whereby the wealthy might share

with the poor the gifts Heaven had showered upon them, she was angrier than ever.

From the hour in which she had asked Rhoda the question concerning her meeting with Owen Courtney, the young wife avoided being alone with her guest.

Honor could not help but notice it, and she smiled to herself. She seemed to have no wish to capture handsome Captain Edmunds or George Dairymple. She preferred to talk to her hostess on each and every occasion.

"You have not told me," she said one day, "where you used to live before you were married."

"Most of my life was spent in a little village outside of the great metropolis," said Rhoda, inwardly hoping the inquisitive girl would not think of asking the name of the village.

Honor did think of it, but concluded that it would be wisest not to pursue her inquiries too ardently.

"All this ought to have been mine," muttered Honor, clenching her hands tightly—"all mine! I loved him first, and I loved him best. She had no right to take him from me!"

These thoughts often ran through Honor's mind while Rhoda was talking to her, believing she was entertaining the best and truest friend she had in the great cruel world.

If the young wife had known her as she really was, she would have turned in utter loathing from the beautiful pink-and-white face; she would have prayed Heaven to save her from this, her greatest foe.

As it was, she saw only Honor Morland's beauty and grace. She heard only kindness in her voice, and she thought to herself that she was very fortunate indeed in securing such a friend.

She talked and laughed so happily that the poor young wife almost forgot her sorrow while listening to her.

Honor wondered if by any chance the young bride had found out how desperately she had been in love with her husband in other days.

Very adroitly she brought the subject round to that topic one day, when she and Rhoda were alone in her boudoir.

At the luncheon-table Mrs. Montague had been discussing the sin of flirting. The young people had all disagreed with her.

What harm was there in it if they had asked.

When she had attempted to explain some of its hidden pitfalls, they had laughingly put their hands up to their ears, as if by common consent they had wished to shut out her good advice.

During this conversation the young hostess was visibly affected, and Honor, watching her with her sea-blue eyes, said to herself—

"I think I have the first clue. Her acquaintance with Owen was never brought about by a mutual introduction."

"What do you think about it, Mrs. Courtney," she asked.

"I do not approve of it, certainly."

"Men never have any respect for women they meet in any way save through an introduction," declared Mrs. Montague. "Indeed, I have often heard that they detest them."

It was noticeable only to Honor how affected young Mrs. Courtney was at this assertion.

It was easy to see how Owen Courtney's young wife adored her husband; but he was not so demonstrative towards her. He was always courteous and considerate, but there was none of the affection which a bridegroom generally exhibits towards his bride, even before strangers. There were times when he even seemed to forget her presence.

During those days Rhoda's love for her husband became so intense that even she was frightened by it.

There was one who noticed the strained relations between Mr. Courtney and his young wife, and that was George Dairymple. He had watched Owen's bride intently.

"I wonder," he thought, "if I could be the means of bringing these two together!"

By chance he had learned the secret which only the servants knew and were guarding so carefully—that Owen's rooms were in one part of the mansion, his wife's in another.

He set to watch her, to see if she was in anyway to blame for this estrangement.

But no; the more he was in her company the more he saw to admire in her. She was so beautiful, he wondered that her beauty alone had not drawn Owen Courtney towards her. He saw her great love for her husband, and his coldness to her, and he said to himself that it would have a terrible ending. With this great house her home, the hapless young wife was pitifully desolate.

The shadow of her unhappiness darkened all. Notwithstanding the crowds that were always at the grand old mansion, the balls, the dances, the lawn fete, she was most miserable.

A noble and loving heart such as hers could not be satisfied. She had taken her part in the gaieties; she had shone fairest at balls and parties, but all the time she moaned to herself, "My heart is empty, my life is in vain."

Her husband's utter indifference to her was worse than open dislike. She made many resolves to get away; but she found herself too weak to carry them out. At first she had hoped that she might win his love; but now she felt satisfied that that hope was in vain, that it could never be realized.

The beautiful grounds were at their best; roses bloomed everywhere in wondrous profusion. She did not even see them now, though she wandered for long hours among them, always unhappy, always lonely.

She missed the love that should have been hers. As time went on, she would miss it still more, and then—what!

As for Owen, he was doing his best with the burden of life. He tried hard not to dislike the girl who bore his name. He only thought of her as the woman who had come between him and Nina. Pride, coldness, indifference, neglect, dislike, all lay between them. Was it to be wondered at that they drifted further apart!

The young wife became more and more unhappy day by day. Once, in following the windings of a brook, Rhoda was startled at finding herself several miles from home. Glancing up with a start, she found that the sun had almost reached its height. She had been gone longer than she had intended.

Perhaps there was some way by which she could take a shorter cut to the house. She saw a woman slowly advancing along the path, carrying a little baby in her arms. She stopped short as the woman approached. She recognized her as the wife of one of the village merchants.

Rhoda had often seen her driving on the road with her husband, holding the little child in her lap and she had said to herself, as she turned away to hide the tears that would spring to her eyes, "That woman has everything in this world to make her life happy. I would exchange places with her gladly if I could."

The woman smiled as she saw Owen Courtney's young wife, and appeared annoyed upon observing that she was about to stop and speak to her. She answered her question readily enough, and pointed out the way, a short cut over the meadows, that would bring her near to her home. Still Rhoda lingered, looking wistfully at the young mother.

"I have often seen you, from my window, rambling by the brook-side. You must be very fond of out-door life," said Rhoda.

"I do love the sunshine," replied the young woman; "but I do not come out for it only for myself, but for baby's sake also."

A great, sudden thrill that made her soul grow faint and dizzy filled Rhoda's whole being as her gaze rested on the babe she carried. She thought of that other one, in a nameless grave, sleeping under the daisies. It would have been just about the age of this little one had it lived.

"How happy you must be!" sighed Rhoda.

"We are not always what we seem," replied the woman, with a sigh. "I love this little thing very dearly, but it is not my own child. I had a little one whom I loved better than my life," went on the woman, sadly. "When it died, I refused to be comforted; I took on so that my husband grew frightened."

"Don't fret, Margaret," he said; "I will find a way to comfort you."

"He sent to some foundling asylum in the

great city, and this little one was brought to me to fill the aching void in my heart. I love it very dearly, but oh! it can never take the place of the one I lost."

Owen Courtney's wife was looking at it with her soul in her eyes.

"Poor little wail!" she sighed; "it was very fortunate in securing a home with you."

"Thank you, Mrs. Courtney," said the woman. "We are poor and plain people, but we will do what we can for the poor little thing."

She was about to pass on, thinking she had taken up too much of the lady's time with her story.

Suddenly Rhoda turned, her beautiful dark eyes heavy with tears.

"Would you mind letting me hold the baby for just one minute?" she asked, wistfully.

"No; certainly not," replied the woman, with a pleasant smile.

Again that thrill which she could hardly define shot through her as she received the babe from the woman's arms. She bent her face over the little rose-leaf one that lay upon her breast. Her lips moved, but no sound came from them.

It seemed to rend her very heart-strings to relinquish her hold of the infant—to hand it back to the woman who waited to receive it. The moments seemed to fly by on golden wings.

It seemed to Rhoda that she could stand there for long hours looking down into that lovely little face and those two great starry eyes that looked up, wonderingly into her own. It cost her a great pang to hand the child back to the woman. But time was fleeting. She could not remain there longer, for the distant bells of the village were already ringing, proclaiming the noon-day hour, and she must go home, or luncheon would be kept waiting.

"You come here often?" she asked, turning again to the woman.

"Almost every day," was the reply.

The hapless young wife made up her mind that she would see them often. Acting upon a sudden impulse, she took out her purse and handed the woman a golden coin.

"Take that for the little one," she said. "What is its name?"

"We haven't decided upon its name yet," returned the woman; "we have only had the child a few weeks."

"Would you think over it if I suggested a name?" asked Rhoda wistfully.

"Yes, indeed," replied the woman. "You may be sure I would."

"Why not call her Rhoda?" murmured the young wife, with her whole heart and soul in her eyes.

"That is a beautiful name," cried the woman—"Rhoda Mayne. That is what it shall be!"

Somehow the naming of the poor wail gave to the hapless young wife a great relief.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

RHODA wended her way over the flower-strewn meadow, with her heart beating more wildly than it had ever beaten before. She could not forget the flower-like little infant that had looked up into her face, and which had so strangely affected her.

Even the guests noted her heightened colour; and Honor Morland watching her narrowly from across the table, wondered what brought the brightness to her eyes.

She looked at Owen with intense interest. Surely there was no corresponding gladness in his eyes. Indeed, he looked unusually careworn.

"I will soon find out what has happened," said Honor, with a pang of bitter jealousy.

A little later she sought Rhoda in her boudoir.

"It has commenced to rain," she said, "and I am at a loss to know what to do with myself. The Montague girls have gone to their rooms to rest, and their mother wears me talking about Christian charity. The gentlemen have repaired to the smoking-room, and so I have sought you."

"You are very welcome," said Rhoda. "I will do my best to amuse you."

As she looked at Honor, she said to herself—
"How foolish I have been to imagine that this brilliant, beautiful girl should care for a man who belonged to another girl."

Honor had a very fascinating way when among women, and now she exerted herself to please Owen Courtney's young wife as she had never exerted herself to please anyone before.

"What a very cosy bondoir you have, Rhoda!" she said. "It is like a casket for some precious jewel. How considerate your husband was to have it furnished to suit your rich dark beauty. I used to think that nothing was pretty except white and gold or blue and white."

"That is only natural," returned Rhoda. "You are a pronounced blonde, you know."

"Then you do not agree with me that there is a possibility of blondes liking rich dark surroundings?"

"No; I should not fancy so," returned Rhoda, "except that blondes usually fall in love with dark men."

Honor flushed a vivid scarlet, which Rhoda did not see, for at that moment Honor's face was turned from her.

"Yes, that is very true," returned Honor, making an effort to control her emotion.

In her case, she knew that the old saying was at fault. The strong, passionate love of her heart had gone out to Owen Courtney, and he was fair. He was her ideal of manly beauty. The faces of other men appeared quite insignificant when compared to his. She was anxious to turn the conversation into another channel.

"I have often thought, amid all this gaiety how lonely you must be at times without some girl friend to talk over matters with you," said Honor.

"You are quite right," said Rhoda, eagerly. "I do need a girl friend, someone of my own age, to whom I could open my heart."

Honor glided up to her and threw her arms about her neck.

"Let me be that friend," she whispered, eagerly.

The young wife looked at her wistfully; her cheeks flushed.

"I shall be only too glad, Honor," Rhoda said.

"If she had heard that I was in love with her husband, I must first throw her off the track," thought Honor.

"I am going to tell you a secret," she murmured aloud; "but you must not reveal it to anyone. I have had a strange love affair Rhoda."

She felt the young wife start, her figure tremble; she saw the lovely face grow pale. But not appearing to notice her agitation she went on—
"My hero is as dark as a Spanish knight. I met him recently. It was a case of love at first sight. He proposed to me within a fortnight. But my relatives do not like him; wealthy, handsome, courteous, though he is. They have forbidden him the house, yet I think in time they will overcome their objections."

She could plainly see how her fictitious story relieved the young wife. The colour came back to Rhoda's cheeks, the light to her eyes. She threw her arms impulsively about Honor, and kissed her fair, lovely, treacherous face.

"You are indeed to be envied, Honor," she said, earnestly. "To love and be loved is the greatest happiness Heaven can give anyone. I hope, for your sake, that your lover may win his way to the hearts of your relatives. But you know that the course of true love never did run smoothly."

"My lover is a great friend of your husband's and perhaps he has told you about it?"

"No," said Rhoda. "I assure you that Mr. Courtney has not spoken to me on the subject;" and she looked very disconcerted.

"I am sure your husband must have received a letter from my lover and hidden it away somewhere. Won't you be so kind as to look thoroughly through his desk, and see?" asked Honor.

Rhoda drew back in alarm.

"Oh, I could not do what you ask. Mr. Courtney's rooms are in another part of the house," Rhoda answered, thoughtfully.

Rhoda now realised the importance of the admission she had thoughtlessly made. But she could not recall her words—it was too late.

Honor looked astounded. This was a state of affairs of which she had never dreamed. Her idea had been to find some pretext to look through Owen's desk, and to abstract all the notes she had written to him.

She remembered one or two which she had written in which she had poured out her love for him in a mad fashion, and she would not like anyone to come across them.

But here she had unearthed a startling surprise. Owen's rooms were in another part of the house. Then they were indeed estranged. She must find out the secret that lay between them.

"I am so sorry to have unearthed so sad a secret," cried the false friend, winding her arms more tightly about Rhoda, and turning her face away, that the young wife might not observe the look of triumph in it. "But every life has its sorrow, and perhaps it was meant that I should comfort you. If you are wearing out your heart longing for the sympathy of a true friend, oh, dear Rhoda, please confide in me, and let me help you!"

The words had such a ring of sympathy in them that it was no wonder the young wife believed her. She was young and unversed in the ways of the world, or this beautiful false friend could not have deceived her so.

"Oh, Honor, I am unhappy," she sobbed, "surely the most unhappy girl the sun ever shone on! I must make a confidant of someone—tell someone my troubles, or I shall die. My—my husband does not love me!"

"Does not love you?" repeated Honor.

"Then why on earth did he marry you?"

The hapless wife could find no answer to that question; her head drooped, and her lips were dumb.

"I am so glad you told me this," said Honor, and it was strange that Rhoda did not notice the ring of triumph in the voice of her false friend as she said—"I will do my best to bring you two together. I do not ask which one is at fault. Both cannot be entirely to blame."

"There is a shadow between us which never can be lifted," sobbed the young wife, putting her head on Honor's shoulder. "There is love on only one side," went on Rhoda, despairingly, "He is indifferent to me, and—and he will grow to hate me."

"Forgive me, please, if I have been so engrossed in my own love affair that I did not notice anything was amiss between my old friend Owen and his fair young bride."

"I almost dread to think of the future," moaned the young wife. "There are times when I give myself up to wondering over the strange problems of life, and I ask myself why I, who should be happy, find the world so dark and dreary."

"You must be very patient," said Honor, "and above all things, let me warn you against being the first to make overtures for a reconciliation."

"Oh, I am so very, very glad that I have had this talk with you," sobbed Rhoda, "for during the past week I had come to the conclusion that the very first time I found my husband in the library I would go up to him, and say—'This kind of life is killing me. It would be better far for you to plunge a knife into my breast and kill me. Either take me to your heart, either make me your wife in fact as well as name, or send me out into the coldness and bitterness of the world. I can endure this no longer. Your friends crowd about me, thinking I am the happiest person in the world, while I am the most miserable. I must go from here, because I have learned to love you, my husband, with all my heart and soul. You may be surprised to hear this from me, but it is the truth. I love you as no one else ever will. You may live for years, flattered and happy but no love like mine will ever come to you again. Although you married me, yet you do not love me, and never will. Always remember that the wife who is leaving you loved you with all her heart. I would not tell you this now, but that I know in this world we may never meet again.'"

Her voice died away in a whisper as she uttered the last word, and the false friend who

had determined to part husband and wife said she had learned just in time what was necessary to prevent a reconciliation between Rhoda and her husband.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

AFTER Honor Morland had learned of the estrangement of Owen and Rhoda, she made up her mind that she would part them forever.

But how! She thought over the matter long and earnestly. She was standing in the magnificent drawing-room one morning, when George Dalrymple entered.

"How does it happen that you are not out for a canter on horseback with our host and Captain Edmonds?" she asked. "This is such a delightful morning."

"Ah, Miss Morland," he replied, laughingly, showing a handsome set of white teeth, "I was just bemoaning that fact. But I had some important letters to write, and I was obliged to remain in my room and finish them."

At that moment they saw their young hostess crossing the lawn. Honor saw George Dalrymple look after her with a long, steady, earnest gaze until she was quite out of their sight.

"Are you admiring our young hostess?" she asked, suddenly, with something like a frown on her face.

"Yes," he answered, frankly. "I was just thinking that Mrs. Courtney has the sweetest face and most charming manner of any woman I ever met."

"Then you admire her style of beauty?" said Honor a little piqued.

"Yes, very much," said George Dalrymple. "If I had met her before she married our friend Owen, I think I should have fallen in love with her myself."

The words were innocent enough; but George Dalrymple never for a moment dreamed of the terrible mischief they were to do in the after years.

Those words so simply uttered sent a thrill through the heart of the girl who listened.

"Ah, I have it!" she said to herself. "A way is opened to me at last to part Owen Courtney and his wife. I will encourage George Dalrymple's admiration for the beautiful Rhoda. Men are easily flattered. There is no knowing what the end will be."

It was a plot worthy of a fiend incarnate; but this girl who loved Owen Courtney, would stop at nothing to gain her end.

George Dalrymple was surprised at the strange look on Honor Morland's face as she turned to him suddenly, and said—

"Do you believe in 'affinities' Mr. Dalrymple—that two people were born to love each other wherever they met, no matter what stands in the way?"

"Yes," he answered, and by his words he was thoughtlessly playing into her hands. "There certainly must be an attraction, or there would be no love."

"I quite agree with you," said Honor. "Love is sent into our hearts by a power which we cannot resist, which is impossible for us to control. Were there ever truer words than those of the poet who said—

"Two shall be born the whole wide world apart,
And speak in different tongues, and have no thought
Each of the other's being, and no heed;
And these, o'er unknown seas to unknown lands
Shall cross, escaping wreck, defying death,
And, all unconsciously, shape every act
And bend their wandering steps to this one end—
That, one day, out of darkness they shall meet,
And read life's meaning in each other's eyes!"

"Do you know," she went on, musingly, "that your words—if you had met Rhoda before she was married, you should have fallen in love with her—recalls a conversation which I had with her only yesterday on the very same subject! We were standing in her boudoir, looking out of the window. You were coming up the gravelled walk smoking a cigar, and we had just been discussing the subject of 'ideals.' Rhoda looked at you long and thoughtfully as you advanced."

"Speaking of ideals," she said, laying her hand lightly on my arm, "I will tell you that Mr. Dalrymple is truly my idea of what a man ought to be. I fancy that if I had met him before I was married, I would have been sure to fall in love with him."

"Did she indeed say that?" asked George Dalrymple, flushing to the roots of his fair hair.

"Yes," said Honor, uttering the falsehood without even a tremor of the eyelids. And he believed her; she could see that.

She had put the first drop of poison into the cup which three people were to drain to the dregs; and the misery of three lives in the after years could be traced to that conversation and the terrible lie Honor Morland had uttered.

She turned the conversation into another channel, knowing she had said enough. Looking at George Dalrymple stealthily from beneath her long lashes, she could see that he was thinking deeply, and she intuitively guessed the tenor of his thoughts.

Very soon she made some laughing excuse for leaving him, and watching from the window of her room, she saw him stroll over the lawn in the very same direction that Rhoda had taken.

The words which Honor had uttered had indeed wrought much mischief. He had felt an unutterable pity for the beautiful young girl whom he knew Owen disliked. Truly the old saying was exemplified—"Pity is akin to love."

Rhoda went to her favourite seat, the mossy rock by the brook, and sat down to rest. Her one thought was—would Mrs. Mayne pass that way with the little baby?

It was a lovely June day. The sun was shining and the birds were singing in the trees. The sweet wind was blowing; and the fragrance of the newly-made hay came from the meadows. The birds were sitting about on the boughs of the trees; the white daisies and golden buttercups studded the grass by the brook-side.

No thought came to her that on this eventful day a strange change was to come into her life, that the shadow of fate was creeping nearer and nearer in the form of a fair, handsome young man with a debonaire face and laughing eyes.

Rhoda looked up with a start on finding her retreat invaded, and saw George Dalrymple standing before her.

She did not know that he had been there watching her for some minutes.

She little knew what a lovely picture she made, sitting there under the shadows of the great oak-trees. Their grand branches stood out, forming a canopy. The sunlight filtered through the green leaves and touched the beautiful, flower-like face framed in its mass of dark curls; it touched the white hands lying solidly in her lap; it lay athwart the spotless white dress she wore.

The sweet summer air had given her the fairest bloom.

"I beg pardon," said George, lifting his hat from his hair, clustering curls. "Pray, do not let me disturb you."

Rhoda glanced up, a quick, startled blush mantling her cheek and brow. It was not the presence of the young man standing before her that brought the blush to her cheek and brow, but the train of thought which he had disturbed. She had been murmuring, half-aloud, over and over again—

"Will the woman bring the little child today?"

Had he heard her? No wonder that her eyes fell and a great crimson flush overspread her startled face.

Remembering the story that Honor Morland had told him, he attributed her agitation to another cause.

"I did not know you were here," he said, "or I should not have wandered in this direction."

"Why should you not?" she asked, wonderingly; and there was a note of sadness in the sweet voice.

He flung himself down in the long grass at her feet and looked up into her face; but he did not answer her question.

He talked to her for an hour or more, and in listening to him the hapless young wife forgot her own sorrows.

George Dalrymple had a wonderful gift of conversation. He never failed to interest those whom he wished to entertain. Rhoda listened in wonder. No one had ever talked to her like this before.

Watching the eager light in the beautiful, sparkling face, George Dalrymple wondered why Owen Courtney had not learned to love his young wife; and a strange bitterness stole into his heart, that the love of so peerless a creature should be given to a man who held it so lightly.

It was an hour that Dalrymple never forgot. He had pitied her before for the lonely life she led. Now he longed to take the little white hand in his, and tell her how sorry he felt for her. She was so young, there must be in her heart a longing for companionship, for love.

How lonely life must be for her in this grand old mansion, when its master showed such utter indifference toward her.

"If I could only make her life happy during the short time I will be here! It is my duty to do so. I will try," he said to himself.

At length Rhoda rose from her mossy seat.

"I must go back to the house," she said; adding laughingly: "I will leave you to finish your cigar, which I am sure you came here to smoke."

"No," he answered, frankly: "I should much prefer walking back with you."

They walked side by side to the house. As they walked along, they heard the sound of voices coming from the direction of the stables.

"Captain Edmonds and my husband have returned from their ride," she said. "I feel sorry because you have missed it."

She had stopped to gather some pink roses from a bush as she spoke, and in all the long years of her life, whenever she saw a pink rose she thought of the answer he had given her.

"Do not say that," he cried, "for I assure you I have spent the happiest morning in all my life."

It did not occur to her that he meant because she had been his companion. Perhaps it was because he had written a letter that morning to his sweetheart. It never for a moment occurred to her that she was in any way connected with the happy morning he had spent.

It so happened afterward that every time she wandered down to the brook she found George Dalrymple in her favourite nook; or if not already there, he soon put in an appearance; and the hours she passed with him seemed like a gleam of sunshine in her lonely life. She was as unconscious as a child of coming danger.

(To be continued.)

It is estimated that the number of individuals who emigrated from Europe in seventy-three years, 1816-1888, at 27,205,000. Of these 15,000,000 went to the United States.

WOMAN'S education has gained a point in Germany. The first gymnasium or school of the grade preparatory to the university for girls will be opened at Breslau in April.

EXPERIMENTS of an interesting nature have lately been made at the instigation of the Prussian War Office, to endeavour to decide the question as to whether the consumption of small quantities of sugar renders the tired muscles capable of renewed exertion. In order to obtain a practical result, the person who was made the subject of the experiment was kept totally ignorant of the object of the experiments. On one day a sweet liquid was administered, containing thirty grams of sugar; on the next day a similar liquid, containing a sufficient amount of saccharine to render it indistinguishable from the other as regarded taste. After a very large amount of muscular work had been performed, it was found that better results could be obtained on the days when the sugar was given than on the days when saccharine was given. The blood had become very poor in sugar in consequence of the severe muscular effort, and the administration of a comparatively small quantity of sugar had a markedly invigorating effect.

ACCIDENTS due to the obscuration of objects by fog are so common that scientists are making a study of absorbent power of fog as regards lights of all kinds. It appears that London fog absorbs 20.8 per cent. of the light from an incandescent burner, while the ordinary gas flame loses but 11.1 per cent. The incandescent light contains more blue, and this is readily absorbed by the fog. Red lights are much more penetrative than blue, and as the gas light contains far more red than the electric, it is much more valuable as a light for use in very heavy fogs. It is a fact familiar to everyone that when the sun shows through mist, it is of a deep red colour. This is accounted for by the fact that the blue rays are entirely absorbed, leaving only the red with its much more powerful quality of penetration.

THE curious spectacle of a marine craft propelled by enormous air-tight disc-shaped hollow wheels suggests a radical departure in the methods of boat-building. That the experiment was a failure, was the natural consequence of the principles on which the craft was constructed. All of the machinery and passenger accommodations rested upon a platform supported by these air-tight wheels arranged in rows on either side. The general effect was that of a huge wagon, the box of which rested on the water. One of the causes of the failure of this venture was that the wheels took up sufficient water to handicap them seriously. An attempt was made to counteract this by increasing the power, but this added to the weight of the machinery, and did not work successfully. A device to scrape the water from the wheels was equally futile, and as it stands now the roller boat has scored a most brilliant failure.

It is a curious fact that while enormous sums of money, and property of great value have been appropriated and used in exploring the more northerly portions of this globe, little or no attention has been given to the extreme southern part. Of late, however, the eyes of explorers have been turned Antarcticward, and expeditions are being sent out to determine various debatable questions that have arisen concerning this country. No human foot, as far as known, has ever approached nearer to the South Pole than 720 miles. The ice is said to far exceed that found in the North Pole, and greater difficulties are apprehended than Arctic explorers have ever encountered. Vegetation ceases at about 58 degrees, no man has yet been met with South of 56 degrees, and the country is destitute of land animals south of 88 degrees. Mountains with towering peaks have been discovered, and volcanoes are thought to be numerous. Whether the intense heat of the latter may exert any influence upon the climate in their vicinity is a question of interest to the scientific world.

It would hardly be believed that moles, clumsy, almost blind, little beasts that they are, become perfect demons when they quarrel. No one knows what they quarrel about, but if they once start fighting one has to die. They will keep on in the presence of any number of spectators, hanging on to one another like bulldogs, and burying their enormously strong jaws and teeth in one another's flesh. Hedge-hogs, another type of the quiet, inoffensive animal, not only fight, but always to the death, and when one is killed the other generally devours him. Hares, on the other hand, are proverbially the most timid of creatures. Yet they can fight. A fight between two hares is a ludicrous sight, as they skip and jump over one another. But a blow from the hind legs of a hare is no joke to his opponent. Among birds, robins are the most pugnacious. More than one case could be quoted of two robins so frantically set on killing one another as to have allowed themselves to be picked up in the hands of a looker-on, and there have lain, with beak and claws deep buried in one another's plumage.

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FACETIE.

"Who is your favourite author?" "Pardon me, sir; but I am an author myself."

Mrs. WADSWORTH: "So you keep boarders, do you?" Mrs. Beaconhill: "No, indeed! We merely have a few remunerative guests."

FIRST TELEPHONE GIRL: "Do you know Mr. Ringier?" Second Telephone Girl: "Not by sight, only to speak to."

WILLIS: "I lent Brown my new silk umbrella. Do you think he will lose it?" Wallace: "Oh, no; you are the one who'll lose it."

MISS MAKEUP: "I always celebrate the anniversary of my birthday." Miss Rood: "Dear me! you must find it getting dreadfully monotonous."

TOMMY: "Papa, what is a snob?" Mr. Figg: "A snob is a fellow you need to go to school with who has worked his way into a set where you can't enter."

"Why do you make such a row about that umbrella you lost? Haven't you ever lost an umbrella before?" "Yes; but this one was mine."

A LADY being asked how many calls she made the other afternoon, replied, "Oh, I only made seven; I was unfortunate enough to find everybody at home."

"You had better not go boating with sister," said Tommy Jones to his sister's beau. "Why not, Tommy?" "Cause I heard her say she intended to throw you overboard soon."

BROWN: "What would you do if some one should leave you a thousand pounds?" Jones: "I suppose I'd begin to realise how little a thousand really is."

FRANK: "These young widows have an advantage over you girls, because they know all about men." May: "Yes; and because the only men who know all about them are dead."

"I THANK you, sir, for your kind permission to call on your daughter." "Remember, that I turn out the gas at ten o'clock." "All right, sir; I'll not come before that time."

COUNTRY HOSTESS: "Have you nice neighbours where you live now?" City Guest: "Oh, we have no neighbours now, none at all." Country Hostess: "You ain't any neighbours." City Guest: "No. We live in a flat."

DAD: "I don't know what to do with Jimmy. He is always getting his brothers into rows and then running away and leaving them to fight it out." Friend: "You ought to be proud of him. That boy has the making of a statesman in him."

OLD FRIEND: "Your plan is a most excellent one; but do you think your wife will agree to it?" Married Man: "Oh, yes. I'll tell her someone else suggested it, and I'll call it an idiotic idea."

ETHEL: "Isn't it strange that Floreie attracts such intellectual men?" Maud: "Oh, no! She told me she always planned her gowns when they talked to her, and that gives her face that interested expression."

SEN: "So you were bound and gagged by bandits while in Italy, were you? Regular comic-opera bandits, eh?" He: "No, indeed; there was nothing of the comic-opera style about them. The gags they used were all new."

JOURNALIST (preparing to go out with his wife): "Are you ready now?" Wife: "One moment—only my gloves to put on." Journalist: "Your gloves, eh? Then I'll sit down and write the leading article for to-morrow."

YOUNG JOURNALIST: "I would like to have some advice as to how to run a newspaper successfully." Veteran Editor: "Sorry my lad; you've come to the wrong person. I am only the editor of this paper. Better consult one of my subscribers."

LITTLE BOBBY: "Mamma! the boys is goin' to have a circus. May I act?" Mamma: "Oh, I suppose so. What are you going to do?" Little Bobby: "Nothin' much. They is going to have a pyramid of sixteen boys, an' all I has to do is to stand on top."

"As the immortal William once said," remarked Prince Henry, "there's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will." "Really, now, Heinrich," said the Kaiser, as he overheard the remark of the prince, "that is quite clever; but when did I say it?"

Mrs. HUNT (a popular and prosperous pumper): "Now, Albert, what'll yer say, when I tike yer into the kind lady's dromin'-room?" Albert (a prudent pupil): "Oh, all right, I know—put on beautiful lorst look, and say, 'Oh, muvver, is this 'eaven!'"

HUSBAND: "Why do you pay the newspapers at advertising rates to exaggerate the success of our party, Helen? It was a colourless affair, and some of our guests seemed really miserable." Wife: "So many sent regrets and stayed away, dear, I want to make them feel miserable too."

MISTRESS: "Mary, what are you doing with that clock?" Mary (with the servants' bedroom clock under her arm): "Please, mum, Olm takin' it to a watchmaker's. It's all out av order, mum. Ivery morning at folve o'clock it goes all to paces, an' makes such a racket Ol can't slape."

A MAN went to a chemist's and asked for something to cure the headache. The druggist held a bottle of hartshorn to his nose, and he was nearly overpowered by its pungency. As soon as he recovered he began to rail at the druggist, and threatened to punch his head. "But didn't it help your headache?" asked the apothecary. "Help my headache?" gasped the man. "I haven't any headache. It's my wife that's got the headache."

THE haughty young typewriter drew herself to her queenly height. "George Vermillion," she said, in icy tones, "no one could mistake your attentions to me. My lawyer says I have a beautiful case. Either I will sue you for breach of promise, or else you must give me the legal right to write 'Mrs. George Vermillion' on my calling-cards." "Write it!" gasped the unhappy employer; "great Caesar, girl, you can't even spell it!"

"I SUPPOSE," said the stern parent, "you know that the man who takes my daughter takes her as she stands, without a penny!" "You don't say so!" replied the impetuous lover. "In that case I should be doing the dear girl a great wrong. I love her too well, sir, to take her under such conditions." And the stern parent embraced the impetuous lover and folded him to his breast, and said unto him: "You are the man I have been looking for. You are an easy-going liar, and you have tact."

"PECULIAR accident on your line this afternoon wasn't it?" remarked the village postmaster to the stationmaster on the L. C. D. "Accident!" exclaimed the stationmaster; "why, there was no accident that I know of." "It happened to the express due here at 2.10. What time did it get in to-day?" asked the postmaster. "At 2.10; exactly to time," replied the representative of the soulless corporation. "So I understood," continued the village postmaster; "and, as I remarked before, it was a peculiar accident."

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SOCIETY.

THE Prince of Wales is to pay a Saturday-to-Monday visit to Lord and Lady Wantage at Lookings Park, Berkshire, from June 11th to 13th.

THE German Emperor wears two bracelets on his left wrist. One contains a useful little watch, the other is in the form of a gold cable.

THE Princesses of our Royal Family have, on the average, married at the age of twenty-two; the Princess when about twenty-eight.

THE Duchess of York will stay at Montone for a month, and is then going to Copenhagen for a fortnight, where she is to meet the Duke, who will proceed there from London about April 1st.

THE German Crown Prince has lately passed his examination as an ensign. It is expected that his Imperial Highness will remain another year at Ploen.

THE Empress of Austria has to give a written receipt for the State jewels every time she wears them, and her Majesty, as a result, usually contents herself with her private collection, which is estimated to be worth £300,000.

THE engagement is announced of Princess Victoria Kaiulani of Hawaii to Prince David Kawananakoa. Prince Kawananakoa is quite well known in California, where he was educated. He was destined under the monarchy for a career in the Department of Foreign Affairs.

THE Queen is to return to Windsor Castle from the Riviera about Thursday, April 28th, and will be at Buckingham Palace for a few days during the first week in May, when there is to be another Drawing Room. Her Majesty will arrive at Balmoral, according to present arrangements, on Saturday, May 21st.

THE wedding present of the landed proprietors of Denmark to Prince Christian, eldest son of the Crown Prince, is to be a complete and splendid service of silver plate. The marriage of Prince Christian to the Duchess Alexandrina of Mecklenburg-Schwerin is to take place privately at Cannes shortly after Easter, and the bride and bridegroom will proceed a few days later to Copenhagen.

THE Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, who are now at Cannes, will not go to Copenhagen for the celebration of King Christian's eightieth birthday next month, as had been originally arranged. There is to be a great gathering of the members of the Royal Family of Hanover and their intimate friends at Cannes on April 14th for the celebration of the eightieth birthday of Queen Marie. The King and Queen of Denmark are to be the guests of the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland at Garmunden for several weeks early in the summer, after his Majesty's visit to Wiesbaden, and in August the Duchess is to go, with Princess Marie, to Denmark, where she has not been since the autumn of 1895.

THE King of Denmark's eightieth birthday falls on Good Friday, so the festivities at Copenhagen in celebration of this anniversary are to begin on Easter Monday, and will extend over several days. There is to be a great gathering of the Royal family at Copenhagen, including the Emperor and Empress of Russia, the Dowager Empress, the Grand Duke Michael and the Grand Duchess Olga, the King of Sweden, the Princess of Wales and Princess Victoria, the Duke and Duchess of York, the Duke and Duchess of Sparta, the Grand Duchess of Luxemburg, and the Hereditary Grand Duke and Grand Duchess, Prince and Princess Charles of Sweden, Prince and Princess William and Prince and Princess Frederick of Schaumburg-Lippe, the Duchess Dowager of Anhalt-Bernburg (King Christian's sister), the Prince and Princess of Wied, the Princess John and Hans of Gieckburg, and Prince and Princess Frederick Charles of Hesse, who are to represent the German Emperor.

STATISTICS.

To be perfectly proportioned, a man should weigh 28lb. for every foot of his height. There are 9,000,000 acres of original forests in West Virginia.

THE smallest known insect, a parasite of the lizard, is but one-nineteenth of an inch in length.

FIFTY years ago the transportation of a letter cost about twenty times as much as it does now.

WHEN the sparrowhawk is swooping down on its prey it cleaves space at the speed of 150 miles an hour.

TAKING the average depth of the ocean to be three miles, there would be a layer of salt 230 feet deep if the water should evaporate.

THE greatest height ever reached in a balloon was 26,180 feet; two of the three aeronauts who made this ascent were suffocated.

GEMS.

INSPIRATION, like death, always comes unexpectedly.

MAN more easily renounces their interests than their tastes.

GOOD nature is the very air of a good mind; the sign of a large and generous soul, and the peculiar soil in which virtue prospers.

NOR to know what happened before we were born is always to remain a child; to know, and blindly to adopt that knowledge as an implicit rule of life, is never to be a man.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SUNDAY PUDDING.—One pound of bread-crumbs, ten ounces of finely shredded suet, half a pound of raisins, six ounces of powdered sugar, the grated rind of a large, fresh lemon, and four eggs. Mix well, and steam in a mould or basin from four to five hours. Serve with custard sauce.

A NICE BREAKFAST DISH.—Chopped cold meat, well seasoned; wet with gravy, if convenient; put it on a platter. Take cold rice, made moist with milk, and one egg, seasoned with salt and pepper. If not sufficient rice, add powdered bread-crumbs. Place this round the platter quite thick. Set it in the oven to heat and brown. Do not brown too much. Just a pretty golden colour, because if it is browned too much the bread-crumbs will harden more than is desired.

CURRENT PUDDINGS.—Some long pudding skins, three-quarters of a pound of stale bread-crumbs, two ounces flour, half-pound suet chopped, quarter-pound currants, two ounces sugar, a little ginger or nutmeg; wash the skins in warm water, and let them lie all night in salt and water, then rinse; tie the end of the skin, and then mix all the above ingredients together; fill the skin, leaving an inch for swelling, tie it again, and once more fill in; prick the skins with a fork, put into a pan of boiling water for twenty minutes or half an hour.

SCALLOPED ONIONS.—Boil six large onions till tender, changing water twice. Make a cream sauce by scalding one good cup milk, thickened with a tablespoonful of flour and one of butter, rubbed together; a saltspoonful of salt and pinch of pepper. Butter a shallow baking dish; drain onions, put in a layer of onions, sprinkled with salt and pepper; pour sauce over. Cover the last onions with a rather thick layer of grated crumbs; put a tablespoonful of butter into tiny bits and dot over the crumbs; sprinkle a quarter teaspoonful of salt over them. Bake until crumbs are a delicate golden brown.

MISCELLANEOUS.

It is stated that in the sandy deserts of Arabia whirling winds sometimes excavate pits 200 feet in depth, and extending down to the harder stratum on which the great bed of sand rests.

NEARLY all Hons are "left-handed." A famous explorer says that when one desires to strike a forcible blow the animal almost always uses the left paw.

THERE is no plant which animals so detest as the castor-oil plant. A goat will starve rather than eat it, and those destroyers of everything green, the locust and army worm, will not feed upon it.

THE leaf of a creeping moss found in the West Indies, known as the "life plant," is absolutely indestructible by any means except immersion in boiling water or the application of a red-hot iron. It may be cut and divided in any manner, and the smallest seeds will throw out roots, grow, and form buds.

NEAR the Bermudas the sea is extremely transparent, so that the fishermen can readily see the horns of the lobsters protruding from their hiding-places in the rocks at a considerable depth. To entice the crustaceans from their crannies, they tie a lot of snails in a ball, and dangle them in front of the cautious lobster.

THE creature most tenacious of life is the common sea polyp. One may be cut in two, and two creatures are the result. One may be slit lengthwise into half a dozen sections, making as many animals. They may be turned inside out and enjoy themselves just as well as before. If two be divided and placed end to end, the result will be a monster having a head at each end of its body.

FEW words have a more curious definition than "bachelor." Originally, it meant students who had taken their degree. Successful students were crowned with laurel berries, the Latin for which is baccalaureus. These students were not allowed to marry, for fear the duties of husband and father should interfere with their literary pursuits. So finally "baccalaureate," or "bachelor," got its present significance.

BAMBOO is of universal use in China. The windows are delicate lattice work of bamboo, and the furniture is of slender bamboo, bent and curled and plaited. The water bucket is a good big stalk, sawed off just below the joint and made as deep as is needed above it. For a bottle a slender piece is taken and treated in the same way. If a knife is mislaid a good sharp edge of bamboo is taken, and it does just as well for everything, except cutting bamboo, as if it were steel. Hunger is kept off by cutting the little tender shoots just as they peep from the ground and cooking them like asparagus.

THE great majority of fishes can change their colours to adapt themselves to their surroundings. Some fishes can make extraordinary changes; there are many that can make themselves so like the rocks near which they may be, or the bottom in which they lie partly imbedded, that they are practically indistinguishable. It is a striking peculiarity of the blind fish that it does not change its colours with its surroundings, but remains always the same, and the uniform colour which it thus preserves is always darker than the normal colour of the other fishes of the same kind in the same waters.

THE cheapest combs are made from hofs, but are subjected to costly and ingenious processes of manufacture. A circular saw cuts the horns in assorted sizes, the tips being used for the handles of knives and umbrellas. Very high degrees of temperature are necessary, as the hofs and horns have to be heated to make the fibre soft. When the pieces are cut they are placed between screwblocks and pressed flat. Acids are frequently used for staining an imitation of tortoise-shell, and this cannot be detected by a casual observer. The rough surfaces of the comb are smoothed by wheels covered with walrus skin. Polishing is the last process, which is done by wheels covered with leather of different degrees of softness.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

R. A.—Leo XII. is the 194th Pope.
EDGAR.—Algiers in Africa; belongs to France.
E. F.—You must make inquiry as best you can.
O. E.—For either, a solicitor should be employed.
H. G.—Personal evidence is absolutely necessary.
R. L.—Soap and warm water ought to be sufficient.
OWALD.—Only a bookeller or other expert can tell you the value.
WORKMEN.—Your best plan is to advertise and insist on references.
CUNEOUS.—It is said to be still practised in some remote places.
RUPERT.—We think it must be a medal of some kind and not a coin.
DON.—The "e" in "cinematographs" is generally pronounced soft.
ANXIOUS MOTHER.—She must remain at school until she is thirteen.
E. J.—The pearl divers are supposed to go to the greatest depths.
CONSTANT READER.—If he wants her to have all he must make a will.
ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—We do not answer competition questions.
R. F.—You have no legal claim to have any part of the premium returned.
H. W.—Only a lawyer can advise what steps should be taken with that object.
POFFY.—The fluid you mention is used to slightly darken a very light brown.
HATTY.—A few pieces of zinc placed on hot coals will remove soot from a chimney.
A. H.—There is, strictly speaking, no salary attached to the office of Prime Minister.
FRANCOT.—Pay a visit to the Emigrants' Information Office, Broadway, Westminster.
ANXIOUS.—Never having agreed to do so, you need pay no attention to the demand.
L. M.—Brokers' charges for distress for rent are regulated by Act of Parliament.
R. F.—Soak them every morning in a solution of alum and wear ventilating shoes.
A. B.—We should not advise you to mix it with the fresh, it would only spoil the latter.
PONKEL.—No matter what new evidence, he cannot be brought up again on same charge.
BREND.—Consult a professional vocalist and teacher of music as to the quality of your voice.
M. G.—Nitro-glycerine is got by dissolving glycerine in equal parts nitric and sulphuric acid.
LOUIE.—We are not sufficiently acquainted with the tattooing art to supply the information.
IGNORANT.—The wife has no right to dispose of her husband's property without his consent.
ROSE.—We do not know for certain, and have no means of ascertaining, but we think not.
VANITY.—Salt, mixed with lemon-juice, removes the stains of ink, tar, or paint from the hands.
N. L.—There are so many good books on the subject we cannot recommend one in particular.
CONSTANT READER.—A girl of thirteen can leave school if she has passed the fourth standard.
OSKIZ.—The Tichborne claimant was sentenced to fourteen years' penal servitude for perjury.
RUFUS.—Excess in coffee-drinking shows evil effects in irritability of the nerves and loss of temper.
H. B.—You could name anyone, but the person need not accept the duty. All wills must be proved.
OLD READER.—Proof of the wife's death must be obtained before the man can legally marry again.
LEONA.—The ballif can enter if the doors and windows are not closed and fastened; but not after sunset.
HENRY.—The wearing of orange blossoms as a bridal decoration originated in the days of the Crusaders.
REMYRIA.—They should stand just at the side of the bride, and on a line a trifle back of her position.
REGULAR READER.—The Institute was organized in 1883 by Cardinal Richelieu, and reorganized in 1816.
GERALD.—The Chinese dictionary, compiled by Pantaleon 1100 a.c., is the most ancient of any recorded in literary history.
A. H.—The person you mention certainly did exist during last century, but much has been said and written about him which is fictitious.
H. E. H.—There is no reliable cure for your complaint; many remedies are advertised, but none are effectual, and nearly all are injurious.
S. V.—There are dots leading from the corners of the eyes to the nasal cavities, by which the tears are carried away. People who are crying always blow their nose.

PONKEL.—If the sentences are to run concurrently, the prisoner is confined for the term of the longer sentence.

R. F.—Milk is a complete food in itself; it supplies all the elements required for the sustenance of the human body.

L. E.—The life being an adult one there is no restriction upon the number of insurances that may be taken out upon it.

M. D.—The first equestrian statue erected in Great Britain was that of Charles I. at Charing-cross, facing Parliament-street.

M. K.—Apprentices as a rule are not taken in apprentices; premium in sailors varies from £30 to £40; wages not always given.

MAURICE.—The Suez Canal is 83 miles long, and reduces the distance from England to India nearly 4,000 miles for ships.

DOUGLAS.—It certainly would be good form to send the cards to all of the relatives. Such little courtesies should never be omitted.

M. & A.—The marriage must take place within three months of the proclamation of banns, or a fresh proclamation will be necessary.

ASTOR.—There are books of recitations, but one may find something much more to the purpose in the current literature of the day.

ALICE.—You must not think of attempting to remove the mole from your face until a medical man, after examination, has said it will be safe to do so.

IGNORANT.—Chicago is pronounced "Shee-cargo," with the accent on the last syllable but one. It is an Indian name, and signifies "the place of the skunk."

THINK NOT AGAIN OF ME.

DARK BARON'S wings brood o'er my steel
 And, beneath their baneful power,
 My hopes have withered like the dews
 Upon a blooming flower;
 No more I roam the realms of bliss,
 From pang of anguish free;
 Thy love must never, never be mine—
 Think not again of me.

When in the halls of revelry,
 Of music, and of mirth,
 Oh, I would have thee to forget
 That e'er we met on earth;
 I would not wreck thy bark of life
 Upon an unknown sea,
 Go share thy love with some fond heart,
 And waste it not on me.

The shell that is by ocean cast
 Upon the sandy shore,
 Still in its secret deep recess
 Keeps echoing its roar;
 So in my heart, which fate has thrown
 Upon love's hidden reef,
 Still echoes my lost loved one's tones
 Amid my tears of grief.

C. D.—Oxalic acid diluted with water, sponged over the stains, then sponged off with clean water, allowed to dry, after which repolish.

JOAN.—It is your duty to write to the gentleman, asking an explanation. Such procrastination on his part is not a good sign of his fidelity.

M. J.— Maidstone is the chief town in Kent. Canterbury is the principal city, being also the metropolis of the Church and an archbishop's see.

ABELAIDE.—You will never make a satisfactory shape at public singing except you place yourself under a good teacher, in order to have your voice trained.

S. W.—The colonel is in supreme command and can practically do as he pleases, but the doctor is in charge of the hospital, over which he has complete control.

MENNA.—Get a packet of chloride of lime, dissolve a little and strain as directed; have the scorched article stretched on board, then dip cloth in the lime solution and rub the stain with it until it disappears; then rinse at once to wash out the lime.

AGNES.—Get the purest crystal oil, mix as much oil of bergamot (from a chemist) with which to kill the objectionable smell, then rub into soap each morning with a sponge; wash the hair frequently with water containing a little borax.

H. P.—Make it very much as you make starch, and it is certain to be successful; in other words, put a spoonful of rice flour in a bowl with a little water, and beat or bruise it perfectly smooth with an iron spoon, then add about ten times more water, put all in a pot over a gentle fire, and stir till the starch begins to boil, when it is ready, and will look semi-transparent, just like starch, in fact starch will serve your purpose if you can make it.

WILHELMINA.—If you use one large cake for the purpose first cut it across in slices, then place it in a glass dish, and cut it right down the middle and across that again; or, if the small penny cakes, stick the top of each over with one or two blanched almonds, and pile the whole in a neat pyramid form on the dish, then pour over all a custard which has been let get quite cold; the custard should be added about five or ten minutes before serving.

N. L.—Take pulverised ordinary chalk and mix it with a strong decoction of logwood. The addition either of chromate of potassium or green vitriol solution will cause the logwood to become intensely black. A paste made is formed that moulds very readily into crayons or pencils, and these, when dried, are fit for use. The addition of an extremely small amount of gum Arabic water is suggested, but the amount must be so small as to be scarcely appreciable, else the pencils will be as hard as to be almost useless. For ordinary work on hard substances the gum is desirable, but if the pencils are wanted for paper or cardboard the simple chalk and logwood solution will give better satisfaction.

M. A. K.—While everyone admits the necessity that exists for guarding against exposure, especially when there are sudden changes from heat to cold, there are very few persons who take these imperative precautions in the proper way. They are chilly when the weather changes and immediately seek out an overcoat, a jacket, a scarf or a muffler. The shoulder cape comes into use and the feather boa or wrap that is pulled up close about the neck and covers the chest. This is precisely the region that needs the least protection in these changes. If, instead of this, thicker shoes and warmer hose were put on and a warmer covering for the limbs were afforded, the trunk of the body could take much better care of itself. Cold and exposed extremities and too much wrapping around the body creates congestion and paves the way for disease. The hygienic and sensible method is to give the throat, chest and arms a dash of cold salt and water every morning upon rising. An entire sponge bath of this sort is of great advantage, but this treatment of the throat and chest is almost absolutely necessary if one would avoid a multitude of ills that affect this portion of the system.

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